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**'Rising Sun', Japan and
America's paranoia**

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in interview

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Sight and Sound



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Murdoch and Milton

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Amy Taubin is completing a study of *Taxi Driver*

Ben Thompson is rock critic of the *Independent on Sunday*

Back in the heady free enterprise 80s, prophets of the forthcoming revolution in broadcasting technologies had a neat phrase and a pet analogy to go with it. The phrase was electronic publishing. And the analogy was between print and television.

The argument went like this. Once upon a time, the written word was controlled by the state. Then, with the march of progress, the state abandoned this control, a free market in competing printed products developed and with it the free circulation of ideas. Today, when it comes to the printed word, no one would dream of anything different.

When broadcasting began, the airwaves technically available to it were scarce. This meant that broadcasting was necessarily a monopoly and, because of its power, that monopoly had to be public. Now, the new broadcasting technologies of satellite and broad-band cable mean that we can put that behind us. Television can follow the course of print. Let a thousand new television channels bloom.

There were always doubters – less vocal as the 80s marched on, but with a powerful case nevertheless. The real fight for the free press always involved other substantial matters. Milton, one of the great advocates of free publication, was also one of the great advocates of toppling the monarchy. And then there was the not completely comfortable reality of the free-market printed word – William Randolph Hearst, W. H. Smith and all.

Today we can judge between the predictions. With Rupert Murdoch's launch of his 14-channel satellite package, the multi-channel revolution is here at last. Not just a fringe anticipation of a projected future, but a solid feature of popular life. So who got it right – the prophets of electronic publishing or the doubters?

The answer is both. Television has suddenly become very like the periodical publishing industry of the last 100 years. At a stroke Murdoch's package gives us as many television channels as we have national daily newspapers. But at a stroke Murdoch's package has also established concentrations of ownership and control which took decades to develop in print. Effectively Murdoch now has a stranglehold on subscription management systems for satellite – that is why virtually everyone has gone into his package. Add to that the Murdoch organisation's current price war in the newspaper

industry – whose only economic rationale is to drive at least one rival out of business – and we do not seem to have a very fertile ground for a blossoming of genuinely independent and different television.

The traditional answer to such concentrations of market power in the media is government limits on multiple title or channel ownership. Murdoch's dominance in the satellite television field undoubtedly reinforces the case for restrictions on his power.

But as the newspaper industry demonstrates, anti-monopoly legislation can be a fairly feeble weapon. In television there is an extra weapon ready to hand – public provision. Unfortunately, the public providers seem to have distinctly limited horizons faced with the new challenge. The Murdoch satellite package, says managing director of BBC television Will Wyatt, changes the television landscape, but it also points up the value of the licence fee in guaranteeing British-made programmes for British audiences using British talent.

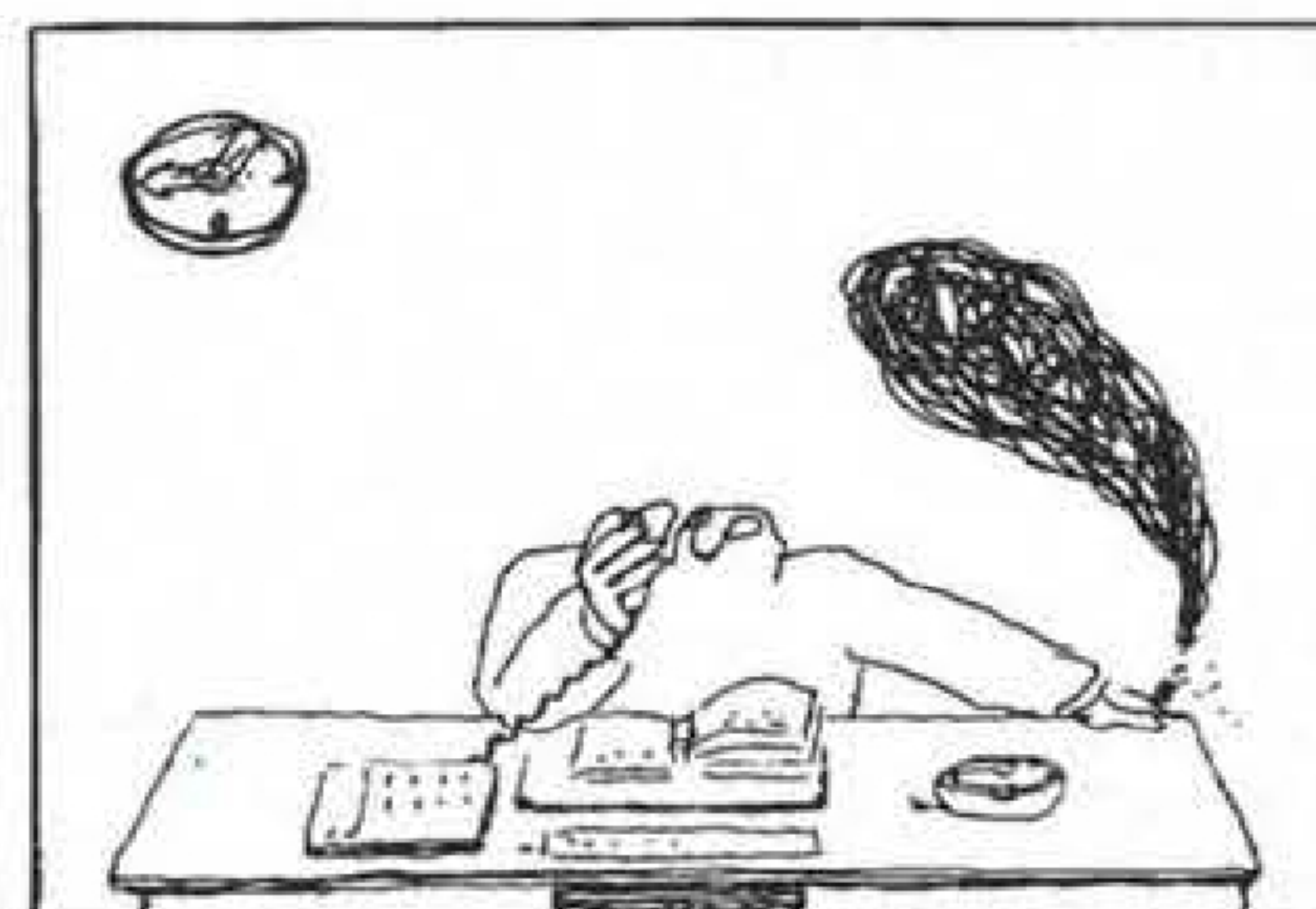
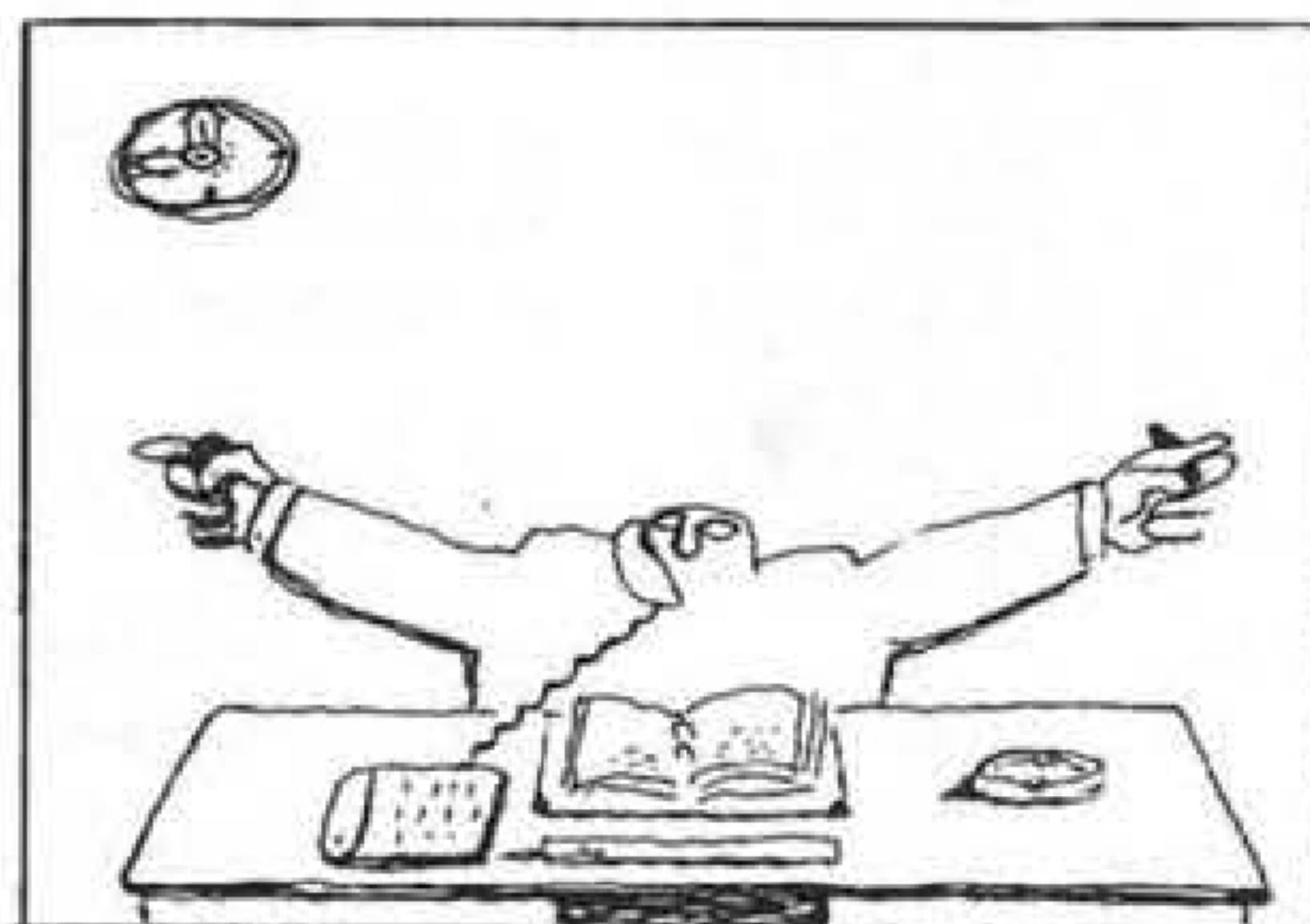
Auntie playing Britannia is simply not an adequate response – if only because, as they prosper, at least some of Murdoch's channels will undoubtedly commission some British material. What is needed is an imaginative public provision of the diversity that the new television delivery systems enable, but which the market will nowhere near adequately provide.

A democratised and more culturally diverse BBC might be as good an organisation as any to make that public provision. It could run new satellite-delivered channels as a public service, providing more adult education, more children's programming, expanding its news provision – the possibilities are enormous. It should also be bolstering the range and quality of programming on its main terrestrial channels so that special interest groups and cultures would not be completely pulled away into commercialised, and often banally programmed, theme channels.

Both these tasks mean more public money – something the BBC currently seems terrified to ask for. It shouldn't be. The BBC needs to stop reacting defensively to the multi-channel revolution and to go on the offensive. The new broadcasting technologies should mean exciting new opportunities for public service – not just more profits for Rupert Murdoch.

JERRY ON LINE #1

Peter Lydon – James Sillavan ©



'Jerry, where's this writer been all summer? Just look at the posters: running men equals smash hits! Yet this draft's still got half a dozen car chases. Heroes don't drive anymore Jerry, they run . . . let's double park the cars, get the talent up on their overpriced feet and work them!'

The business

● Mr Busy, as the writer of this column likes to think of himself, has never had a lot of time for the conspiracy theory, at any rate as applied to such bodies as the FBI, the CIA, the Pentagon or Hollywood. It has always seemed abundantly clear to Mr Busy that, if you have the kind of power those guys have, you don't waste your time conspiring.

But it turns out that Mr Busy was wrong: all those who hinted darkly that conspiracies were mounted against the political content of Hollywood movies in the 60s were right. Or they were if they were talking about Jules Dassin's *Up Tight* (1968), a ponderous remake of *The Informer* starring Raymond St. Jacques as a black revolutionary who betrays the group of which he is a member.

Documents recently uncovered by the *Hollywood Reporter* reveal that FBI boss J. Edgar Hoover sent a memo to his bureau chief in Cleveland (where *Up Tight* was filming) supplying all the dirt anyone could possibly need on Dassin, who had left the US in 1953 after being called before HUAC. The dirt, Hoover hinted, was to be slipped to a reporter on a Cleveland paper who was known to be FBI-friendly. "This," said Hoover's memo, "appears to be an excellent opportunity to take counter-intelligence measures against this picture."

It's easy to see why Hoover hated the idea of the film. Not only was Dassin a known lefty, but the film, being produced by Paramount, was likely to make it on to the major circuits, unlike such 'specialist' fare as *Superfly* – or, for that matter, the commie rubbish being imported from Europe – and so expose the Youth of America to subversive ideas. As such, Hoover regarded it as a more than legitimate target.

It's all different these days, of course: underhand disinformation is out. The FBI, for instance, has recently been co-operating fully with the producers of *The Pelican Brief*, despite being "unhappy" about the way the bureau is portrayed in the script. Better talk to the boys on the inside than disinform from the outside seems to be the motto nowadays.

"We can basically open the doors, provide focus and put film and TV producers in touch with primary source material," special agent Swanson Carter told the *Reporter* of his work with the *Pelican* people. No conspiracy there: all squeaky clean and open for the world to see. But is Mr Busy being paranoid when he wonders what, precisely, is meant by "providing focus"?

The above revelations came to the 'Hollywood Reporter' courtesy of the US Freedom of Information Act. No such act governs Hollywood, as anyone who has ever had a percentage of the net on a film will tell



Children at war: David Puttnam and David Nichols' remake of 'The War of the Buttons'

you. No, the only way you get anything out of Hollywood is via a – or, preferably, several – lawyers. Which is why – and here's proof, should any still be needed, that serendipity rules the studios – the Three Stooges may turn out to be the key to the Hollywood Heidi scandal.

Since 'Sight and Sound' is not a magazine which carries much in the way of gossip, let me briefly explain to more sheltered readers unfamiliar with the scandal that Heidi Fleiss is an alleged supplier of call girls to the rich and famous of Los Angeles, many of whom allegedly work in the movie industry. Like most in her alleged profession, Heidi allegedly possesses a little book, alleged to be black, in which she has allegedly noted down the names of those alleged to have availed themselves of her alleged services.

Among Heidi's clients are alleged to be a certain production executive at Columbia, who has recently been closely involved in the development of a movie based on the lives of Larry, Moe and Curly Joe, aka the Three Stooges. (You will forgive the monotony of the qualifying adjectives, but there are a lot of very expensive lawyers involved in this case, and somebody somewhere is going to have to pay them.)

Movies about other movies are in vogue right now, and the Stooges biopic progressed swimmingly for a while. But then, as will



Bedroom capers: the Three Stooges

happen in the best run of industries (let alone Hollywood), the project hit a reef.

What followed, involving the obligatory quota of lawyers, was a series of suits and counter-suits, which eventually narrowed down to the sum of \$412,000, a figure supposed to have been spent on writers and other creative personnel working on the Stooges project but which could not be accounted for and might perhaps have been siphoned off in the direction of Heidiwood.

By the time this column is published, this little detail will either have proved to be a red herring, or else will have become the cornerstone of the biggest Hollywood scandal since David Begelman endorsed Cliff Robertson's cheque. Either way, it involves such a delightful coming together of two improbably different strands from within the variegated warp and weft of film culture that it seemed a pity not to share it with you.

● You probably didn't know it, but each year the question of eligibility for the Foreign Language Oscars causes at least one major ruckus. Two years ago, the German nominating committee's refusal to submit Agnieszka Holland's *Europa, Europa* (which was a major hit in the US and would probably have won) caused a six-month slanging match of great bitterness in the German press.

Last year, one of the five submissions to make it through to nomination – Adolfo Aristarain's *Un lugar en el mundo* (*A Place in the World*) – was declared ineligible by the Academy at the last moment, on the grounds that it had been entered as a Uruguayan film, whereas "most" of its creative and other input was Argentinian.

Since the last decision made the Academy look like a bunch of idiots (if the film was ineligible, how come

nobody had noticed before it became an actual nomination?), the Governors decided the time had come to set down in writing what had previously been only vague guidelines.

The result is a disaster. The new (or, to be more precise, newly clarified) rules require that a film be in the language of the country under whose banner it is entered; and that, of the producer, director and writer, two out of three must be nationals of that country, together with "most" of the cast and three out of the six following: cinematographer, production designer, costume designer, editor, sound recordist and composer.

In terms of clarification, the rules make sense. But the real problem lies with the continued insistence that a film must represent a single country, since this effectively closes the door to European co-productions (or well over 30 per cent of the films made in Europe in 1992).

Why should the label "foreign-language" have to be tied to a particular country – a practice that reflects the production circumstances of the 50s rather than the 90s? After all, if the Best Picture had to be American – the logical corollary of a "foreign-language" film being primarily defined as foreign – two out of this year's five nominations (*The Crying Game* and *Howard's End*) would have been ineligible.

If you're thinking of getting a new car, now might be the time to apply for a job with Paramount Pictures, which recently dished out several brand-new Mercedes to the principals in its summer box-office smash, 'The Firm'. It is not, of course, unusual for a studio to give little extra gifts to those it is already paying a fortune in the first place

(even if it could be argued that Tom Cruise may not actually need another car). But the Merc saga is a curious one.

In the book, Mitch McDeere gets a new BMW as part of his employment package. Remarking that he didn't want to get involved in a marketing campaign for luxury cars – a reason which, in retrospect, sounds less than convincing – Sydney Pollack made the perk a Merc for the film.

Cars are, of course, very much a part of American movies. And Hollywood producers usually get them on free loan provided they don't break them and that they feature them prominently enough in their films. In the case of 'The Firm', however, Paramount was swift to point out from the start that there would be no doling out of complimentary sets of wheels at the end of the shoot. \$150 million at the box office obviously helped it change its mind.

Hollywood has taken the whole saga to heart. A studio executive was heard to come out of a screening recently remarking that what he'd seen was "no Merc movie".

Meanwhile, John Grisham, author of the original novel, somehow missed out on Paramount's July Christmas presents. No doubt coincidentally, his next novel will be produced at Universal.

● So much has been made lately, in this column and elsewhere, of Hollywood's propensity for remaking things that it is worth pointing out that we Europeans are not immune to the practice.

In Skibbereen, County Cork, for instance, David Puttnam is currently in the process of producing – and David Nichols of directing – a remake of Yves Robert's 1962 classic, *La Guerre des boutons* (*The War of the Buttons*), about gangs of warring children from neighbouring villages. Robert's company, Productions de la Guéville, is teamed with Puttnam's Enigma on

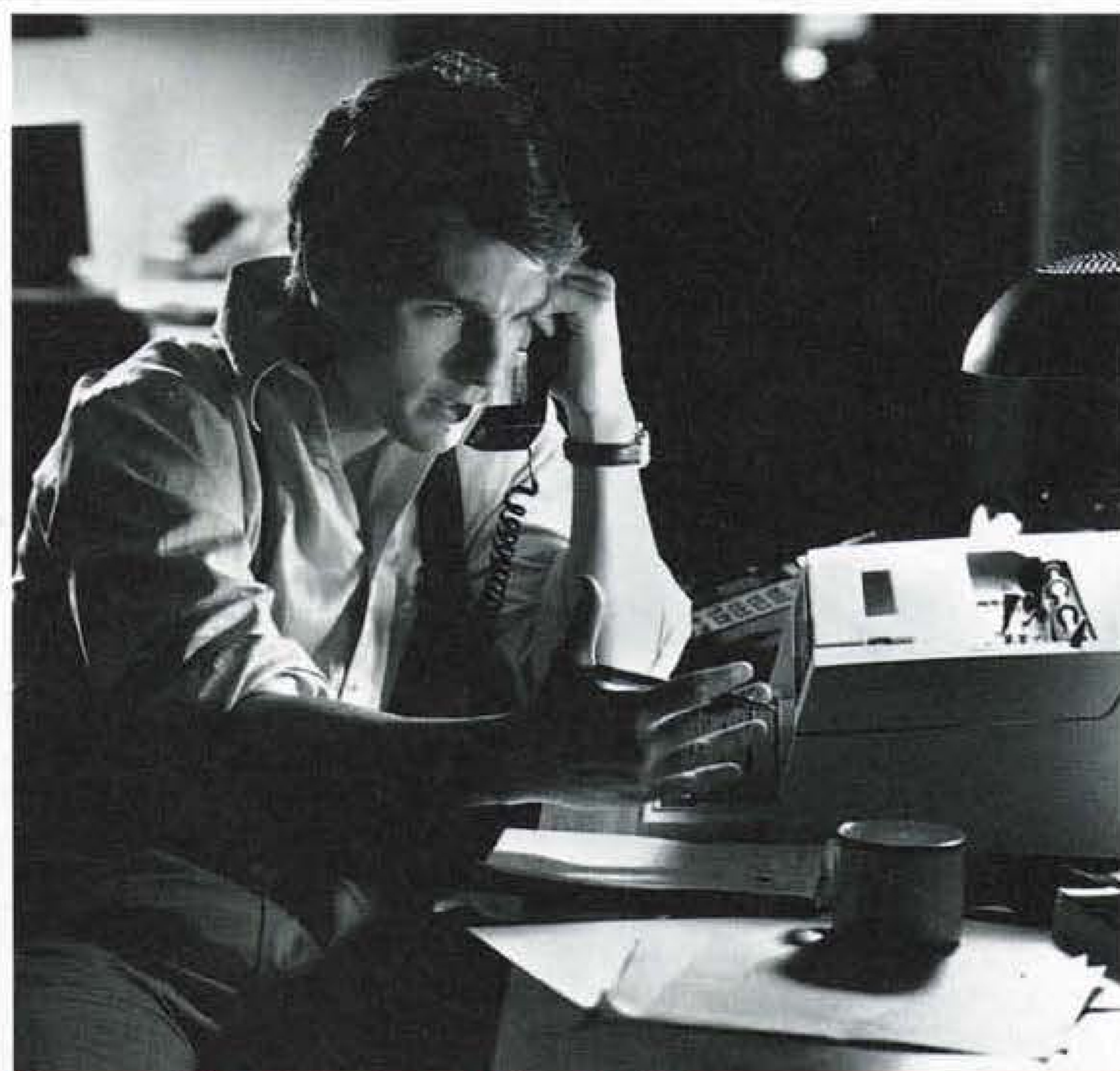
the film. It's also worth recalling that the BBFC was sufficiently upset by the language and nudity of the 1962 film to give it an X certificate.

Meanwhile, outside Toulouse, Claude Chabrol is not so much remaking as finally directing what was to have been Henri-Georges Clouzot's last film, *L'Enfer* (*Hell*), with a cast headed by Emmanuelle Béart, François Cluzet and Nathalie Cardone. And the aforementioned Yves Robert has just wrapped a big-budget production, *Montparnasse-Pondicherry*, starring Miou-Miou and André Dussolier.

Remember Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer, the loud and stunningly successful producers of 'Top Gun'? They fell victim in spectacular fashion to the 'you're only as good as your last movie' syndrome with the failure of 'Days of Thunder', which strove a little too blatantly to repeat the 'Top Gun' formula. There was also a changing of the guard at Paramount, which didn't help, and the boys found themselves in permanent turnaround.

Now they're back with a film called 'The Ref', currently shooting in Canada with Judy Davis, Denis Leary and Kevin Spacey, directed by Jonathan Demme's nephew, Ted. They are, however, definitely *not* attached to 'Top Gun II', which is presently on a fast development track at Paramount.

● As a recent article in *Sight and Sound* suggested, the dividing line between softcore sex movies and mainstream 'thrillers' is getting narrower and narrower (although one useful rule of thumb is that if they cost what *Sliver* cost, they're mainstream). Critical respectability, however, is another matter. Rumours abounded a year ago that Zalman King's slushy, pretty and oh-so-pretentious *Red Shoes Diaries* had been selected for the Directors'



Company perks: Tom Cruise gets a new car from 'The Firm'

Fortnight in Cannes. The rumours proved more than a little untrue, and were eventually tracked back to King's own production company.

More serious prospects of respectability, meanwhile, are attaching themselves to a new four-segment film, *Erotique*, which boasts Lizzie Borden (*Working Girls*, *Love Crimes*), Hong Kong's Clara Law (*Autumn Moon*), Germany's Monika Treut and Ana Maria Magalhaes (Brazil) behind the cameras. Each of the directors has written her own script for the \$6 million film, which is due to premiere early next year.

Another multi-director film with a very different theme made its appearance on the festival circuit this autumn. 'Neues Deutschland' – its title intentionally provocative, since it means not only 'The New Germany' but was also the name of the official Communist Party newspaper in the former GDR – is a response by directors Philip Gröning, Uwe Janson, Gerd Kroske, Dany Levy and Maris Pfeiffer to the re-emergence of fascism in Germany in the past year. Part documentary, part fiction, 'Neues Deutschland' was put together by the Cologne-based state broadcaster, WDR.

● It is, I suppose, reassuring to see that nothing stops the Woodman's schedule of a film every spring, not even custody cases and changes of production company.

In the days when a new Woody Allen film was a surefire franchise, United Artists fought hard to stop him from defecting to Orion along with UA's founders, Arthur B. Krim and Robert Benjamin. But nowadays, a new Woody Allen movie has many of the qualities of a Bob Dylan concert – provoking fond remembrance rather than fresh excitement – and it seems likely that TriStar Pictures (to which Allen transferred in 1991, when Orion was unable to finance *Husbands and Wives*) may not have fought quite so hard to prevent Woody defecting to a new production deal.

The director's next – a 20s comedy starring Chaz Palminteri and Mary Louise Parker – will be made for newcomer Sweetland Films, originally formed by TV producer Jean Doumanian to be the US end of the co-production arrangement for Sven Nykvist's *Oxen* (*The Ox*). Allen will reportedly get bigger budgets (and a bigger fee) from Doumanian.

EDINBURGH NOTES

Struggling to cope with a hefty deficit and continued claims of underfunding, this year's Edinburgh Film Festival substituted prudent housekeeping for innovative programming and suffered accordingly in terms of press coverage and prestige.

The festival is internationally respected for retrospectives devoted to such diverse figures as Bernard Vorhaus, Pupi Avati and Joseph H. Lewis, and to such stimulating themes as "psychoanalysis in the cinema". But the 1993 event failed to muster a single retrospective, apparently due to financial restrictions. The festival was also largely bereft of international premieres and major guests, and appeared to choose not to preview the major autumn commercial releases that might have been considered vital to the event's fiscal health. The coincidental appearance of new works from such stalwarts as Derek Jarman, Ken Loach and Mike Leigh greatly enhanced the New British Cinema

strand, with Jarman's brave and heartrending *Blue* a worthy winner of the Michael Powell Award.

A "Just Do It" weekend, organised in conjunction with The Media Exchange, used shoestring American Cinderella movies like Robert Rodriguez's *El Mariachi* as role models to which frustrated young British film-makers might aspire. The event generated a level of audience enthusiasm and participation that showed the festival at its best. In an ideal world, next year's festival should be able to premiere the films inspired by this weekend, particularly work by resourceful local film-makers who seemed to carry grievances over the festival's lack of accessibility.

American independent features, traditionally an Edinburgh strength, included such circuit prize-winners as *Ruby in Paradise* and *In The Soup*, alongside Forest Whitaker's powerhouse directorial debut *Strapped* and the world premiere of *Mr Wonderful*, a beguiling blue-collar

romance from Anthony Minghella that demonstrated how readily his perceptive eye has survived the potentially tricky transition to an American milieu. The festival offered mini-tributes to the national cinemas of Mexico and Scandinavia, but the Panorama section, which should have been its centrepiece, proved to be its weakest element. Claims to present the best of world cinema looked likely to incur the attention of the Trades Description Act in a section that fielded four films from Canada but nothing at all from Japan, India, China or Africa.

The Edinburgh Film Festival remains the best event that Scotland has for cinema enthusiasts of all sensibilities, but its international renown is currently ebbing. The good news this year was that heavy ticket-price increases and the use of three extra screens did result in an improved box office. The long-term cost to Edinburgh's reputation has still to be counted. Alan Hunter

JANE CAMPION ON HER GOTHIC FILM 'THE PIANO'

I feel a kinship between the kind of romance that Emily Brontë portrays in 'Wuthering Heights' and this film. Hers is not the notion of romance we've come to use; it's very harsh and extreme, a gothic exploration of the romantic impulse. I wanted to respond to these ideas in my own century. My not writing in Brontë's time means that I can look at a side of the relationship that she could not develop. My exploration can be a lot more sexual, a lot more investigative of the power of eroticism. Then you get involved in actual bodyscape as well, because the body has certain effects — like a drug almost — certain desires for erotic satisfaction which are very strong forces. I have enjoyed writing characters who don't have a twentieth-century sensibility about sex. We've grown up with so many expectations that the erotic impulse is almost lost to us, but these characters have nothing to prepare them for its strength and power. I think the romantic impulse is in all of us and sometimes we live it for a short time, but it's not part of a sensible way of living. It's a heroic path and generally ends dangerously. I treasure it and believe it's a path of great courage. It can also be a path of the foolhardy and the compulsive.



Out of muteness, music, dress and desire, Jane Campion's 'The Piano' conjures an unsettling vision of erotic needs. By Stella Bruzzi. Overleaf, the film-makers talk about the film's design to Mary Colbert

BODYSCAPE

● At the beginning of *The Piano*, Ada (Holly Hunter), a mute Scottish woman, arrives in New Zealand with her nine-year-old daughter Flora. They disembark on a remote beach, where they are left by the sailors who accompanied them to await Ada's new husband Stewart (Sam Neill), a rich local landowner. Their strung-out possessions are silhouetted in a flimsy line against the evening sun. Another silhouetted, skeletal structure comes into shot: a tent, made from Ada's hoops and underskirts, beneath which they shelter for the night.

The Piano ends with a parallel scene as Ada, having left Stewart, returns to the beach and boards a boat with Flora, her lover Baines (Harvey Keitel) and the possessions she arrived with. To preserve the equilibrium of the boat she orders her prized piano to be discarded. As it is tipped overboard her foot is caught in the unravelling rope and she is dragged under. Her upturned hoops and skirts billow out against the luminous water. At this point, as at others through the film, Ada appears to be trapped and defeated by her clothes. At the last moment, however, she disentangles herself and swims to the surface, leaving her shoe behind; she has, as her voiceover says, "chosen life". Her clothes, as elsewhere, work for her.

Sexual awakening

The Piano is not a simple women's film about a woman's past, but rather a cryptic and evocative exploration of how women's sexuality, clothes and lives interconnect. It is set in New Zealand in the mid-1800s, and though the exact dates of events are never specified, the age which the costumes, morality and gender relations evoke is central to the way the film tackles its theme. Why has Jane Campion chosen to frame the story of Ada's sexual and emotional awakening in terms of the last century? The Victorian age is seen today as synonymous with the oppression of female sexuality; everything from the voluminous clothes to the many laws which deprived wives of financial autonomy legitimised a patriarchy which kept women in check. In order to express themselves, women were constrained to invent male pseudonyms, to 'ghost' music and art for husbands and brothers, to create elaborate metaphors for their experiences. Their voices were often heard only indirectly: they fabri-

cated unruly, angry alter egos, such as Charlotte Brontë's "mad woman in the attic" or the monstrous creation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, or codified their anger against male brutality as did Artemesia Gentileschi in her violent depiction of *Judith Beheading Holofernes*.

In such a male-dominated history, the experiences of women have been almost entirely obscured, and women since have invaded the past to liberate the female imagination and sexuality, as well as to help them to make sense of the present. Since the 70s women have been unearthing forgotten literary works, creating an alternative cultural canon, reinterpreting male texts, and forefronting experiences deemed peripheral. The desire to articulate this forgotten past is perhaps the common impulse behind such diverse works as Jean Rhys' prequel to *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, A. S. Byatt's *Possession*, Sally Potter's film version of *Orlando* – and Jane Campion's *The Piano*, which empowers Ada with a 1990s strength and self-knowledge that enables her to transcend the limitations of such disempowered nineteenth-century heroines as Emily Brontë's Catherine.

The two most pervasive models of reclamation of the past used by women film-makers could be termed the 'liberal' and the 'sexual'. The liberal method concentrates on finding a political and ideological affinity between the struggles of women in the present and figures from the past. Campion's film about New Zealand writer Janet Frame, *An Angel At My Table*, Margarethe von Trotta's film biography *Rosa Luxemburg*, and the repeated feminist revivals of Ibsen's plays stem from a liberal impulse to utilise the juxtaposition between past and present to illuminate both. The 'sexual' model, by contrast, foregrounds the personal, more hidden aspects of past women's lives – their dormant passions, sexual frustrations and the process of denial which governed their relationships with (primarily) men. Although both types of looking back involve costume, in liberal films these are merely signifiers to carry information about country, class and period. Films interested in the emotive aspects of the past imbue the clothes themselves with sensuality, so they become essential components of the sexual dialogue.

The pioneering Australasian women's film of the 70s was Gillian Armstrong's *My Brilliant*

Career (1979), a feminist reworking of the traditionally male genre of the big liberal history movie – Stanley Kramer's *Inherit the Wind*, Fred Zinnemann's *A Man for All Seasons* and so on. *My Brilliant Career*, a quintessential feminist fairy tale, is based on Miles Franklin's semi-biographical novel about Sybylla Melvyn, a teenage girl from the Bush who chooses a career over a husband. The headstrong Sybylla embodies the struggle for independence and emancipation which was taking place in Australia during the 1890s, but she is equally a construct of the late 1970s – a case of the second women's movement making sense of the first. *My Brilliant Career* was an important feel-good movie for women of my generation, who in 1979 were much the same age as Sybylla was in the late 1890s. Women were still uncertain about what they wanted, but were sure that it was not what was on offer. As Sybylla puts it: being "a wife out in the bush, having a baby every year."

'My Brilliant Career'

More crucial to liberal movies than the superficial authenticity of meticulously costumed films such as Christine Edzard's *Little Dorritt* or *The Fool* is a broad awareness of contemporary events, which form a discrete backdrop to the narrative. *My Brilliant Career* spans five years; Sybylla's voiceover states that the film begins in "Possum Gully, Australia 1897", and at the end we are told that *My Brilliant Career* was published in "Edinburgh, 1901". Australia (far in advance of Britain, which did not grant women the vote until after the First World War) was then in the midst of a successful movement for universal suffrage; two states, South and Western Australia, had already changed the electoral system, while Sybylla's native New South Wales was on the verge of doing so. Sybylla epitomises the exhilaration of this era – her twitching anticipation as she stares into the dawn horizon after posting her manuscript is almost tangible.

The liberal film discerns patterns or draws out meanings which at the time may have been obscured. Sybylla is both historical and contemporary, her struggle (with herself, her family and men) both parochial and perennial. *My Brilliant Career* thus operates as a metaphor for a universal female dilemma. Sybylla remains such a positive role model for women (and ►

◀ paradoxically attractive to all the men in the film) because she pursues her own goals rather than those society would impose. Though she is repeatedly warned that "loneliness is a terrible price to pay for independence", she ultimately refuses all proposals of marriage and puts her own aspirations first. The straightforwardness of Sybylla's choice might in a modern context – such as the much untidier world of Armstrong's latest film *The Last Days of Chez Nous* – appear woefully naive. Placed within a historical context, however, the dilemma and decision gain strength from their very simplicity. The liberal analogy film functions best when the metaphor is less complex than the issues it raises about present-day society. Thus Sybylla's "wildness of spirit" and pursuit of a "career" – which at the start could be almost anything that got her out of the Bush – were points of identification for 1970s women with more specific concerns.

Trapped and unwilling

The Piano offers a more elliptical way of examining the past – one based on complex, hard-to-define emotions and attractions rather than concrete events. This is not to say that *The Piano* is apolitical, but that unlike *My Brilliant Career*, which carries its political commentary

through its plot, *The Piano* does so through clothes and sexuality. Films which use sexuality to explore women's unspoken pasts are more personal, more challenging, more dangerous than their liberal counterparts. It is difficult to envisage women objecting to an uncomplicated liberal film like *My Brilliant Career*, but a sexual film such as Liliana Cavani's *The Night Porter* (1974), which examines Nazism through the sado-masochistic relationship between Max, an ex-camp officer, and Lucia, a survivor, frequently repels its audiences. Cavani confronts us with an ambiguous and unpalatable sexual history in which a woman chooses to re-enter a violent relationship that eventually leads to her death. Perhaps the film says the unsayable: that Lucia is not Max's victim, but his equal; that brutal sexuality is not simply a male construct.

Campion's innovation in *The Piano* is to discover a language which articulates a radical opposition to the restrictions imposed on nineteenth-century women through the very means by which those restrictions are usually manifested – clothes. Throughout the film clothes function as agents to liberate rather than to constrain. Visually this is suggested by recurrent images that demonstrate how clothes are constructed, drawing a distinction

between the harsh frames – Ada's hoops and the wired angel wings of Flora's Bluebeard costume – and the softness and fluidity of the fabrics stretched over them. Both Ada and Flora are seen adjusting to their clothes, exploring and adapting them and finally learning to feel comfortable in them. To return briefly to the mad woman in the attic and Frankenstein's monster: both Charlotte Brontë and Mary Shelley were impelled to create metaphors which externalised the internal 'demons' of their anger; Campion in *The Piano* finds a way for Ada to express herself through (rather than despite of) her Victorian persona.

Campion's reclamation of women's sexual pasts is exhilarating, but Ada's eventual liberation is presented as an arduous struggle against the systematic denial of the existence of female desire. As wife to Stewart and lover to Baines, she represents conflicting aspects of Victorian womanhood. On the one hand she is the trapped, unwilling wife – a New Zealand Madame Bovary with apparently as much chance of escape or fulfilment from her stifling bourgeois marriage. She is also, in her refusal to speak, representative of what the medical profession branded a 'hysterical' woman; catatonia, anorexia, chronic fatigue and other forms of self-imposed sensory deprivation were

THE PIANO

The wedding picture

● Andrew McAlpine, production designer. The script indicated that Ada had reluctantly had the wedding dress placed in front of her. Jane and I had previously discussed how we could do something here to trick the audience into thinking we had transported them somewhere else; to a Victorian photographic studio. It was a very designed situation in which I wanted to encapsulate the old romantic world and then pull back cynically and reveal this piece of artificial imaging.

I had a romantic backdrop painted in beautiful blues and found a marvellous set of curtains that we were originally going to use in Stewart's house. We were playing a wonderful game with the audience, starting in close and then pulling back to expose this scenario in the mud and pouring rain.

The trees were piped for special-effects rain (through underground piping) and we wanted to use clouds and moisture in the air, but you need great stillness to create that. It would have cost US\$35,000 to get misters brought in from the US so it was a case of what the special-effects team could set up cheaply and efficiently, supplemented with rain bars on the day.

The incongruity and politic of the image is obvious in a situation which shows so clearly Ada's incarceration (a recurring image), the irony of Stewart's happiness, Aunt Morag and Nessie's ecstasy at the discomforts of the relationship. The couple in this hell hole are surrounded by a beauty that Stewart in his naive romanticism believed was going to cause them to fall in love, trappings he was sure would seduce his bride.

● Stuart Dryburgh, lighting designer. Jane and I formulated ideas for light, then Andrew became involved to fit in his own ideas about colour. For example, if he wanted some dark red in a scene that was going to be lit blue, we would obviously be working against each other. In this wedding picture there was a lot of deep red to be included, but the light source was neutral so it deepened the red and made it cerise.



Strange light

● Holly Hunter, actor. The costume helped me tremendously; the incongruity of a woman in a laced-up corset, huge hoop skirts, petticoats and pantaloons trying to manoeuvre her way gracefully through the bush. There was an obvious stamina and grace required to wear these clothes in these circumstances. These were essential aspects of Ada's character.

● Andrew McAlpine, production designer. Jane had very carefully worked out the emotional tones of the film so that sometimes we were opting for depth of colour (as in the wedding photograph), and at others – especially in the transitional periods – a monochromatic look, as in black-and-white photographs. At this point Ada and Flora are en route to Baines' house, a very black-and-white decision on Ada's part, the strong purpose reflected in her movements, with Flora reluctantly dragging behind.

It's a classical pictorial depiction of silhouetted objects against the sky, with nature – through the branches of the large pohutakawa trees – like tentacles reaching out to grab the women, continuing the idea of

entrapment. We often altered the landscape to heighten the feeling of a particular scene, as in the scene where Stewart attacks Ada, where the setting was too open so we gave it a web of supplejack, an anarchical tough black-branched creeper which we devised into a web, a huge net, like a tentacled nightmare in which Ada and Stewart struggle.

● Stuart Dryburgh, lighting designer. We tried not to light the bush ourselves, but to work wherever possible with natural light. It's a strange light that comes from above, but also from different directions at once. There can be very sudden gradients of light and shade, from a blaze of sunlight coming through the canopy to the darkest shadow in a creek bed. Generally we've tried to represent it honestly and let it be a dark place.

In keeping with Ada's restless character we were looking for opportunities to move the camera, to create energy by shifting with the characters – even though a lot of the shots are static, with only the characters moving. Often the movement is through a distance, with the occasional tree passing in front of the lens. In this shot we had the camera on flat ground below, following Ada and Flora on a dolly through the bush.



commonplace among dissatisfied and desperate Victorian wives, the majority of whom were regarded as dysfunctional rather than as unhappy. Through the elaborate clothes-language she formulates with Baines, however, Ada engineers her escape from Stewart, drudgery and sexual repression – a modern and radical reassessment of the options available to women in the 1850s.

Legs and the dress

Clothes traditionally signify restraint and conformity; they have covered our nakedness and hidden our shame. Joe Orton's black farce *What the Butler Saw*, for example, concludes with Rance's weary nod in the direction of respectability: "Let us put on our clothes and face the world." The Victorians were obsessed with hiding anything that could be deemed suggestive of sex or nakedness, daubing fig leaves on Adams and Eves and covering the bare legs of tables. The sexuality of Victorian women was repressed or presumed not to exist at all: Queen Victoria herself was so convinced that female sexuality was a dutiful response to men's demands that she denied the possibility of lesbianism.

Victorian women's clothes, as much as the way they were treated, made them inactive and

vulnerable. At the start of Caryl Churchill's 1979 play *Cloud Nine*, set in a "British colony in Africa in Victorian times", the colonial's wife, Betty, complains to her husband because her servant has refused to get the book she requested, having snapped: "Fetch it yourself. You've got legs under that dress." *Cloud Nine* is an elaborate dissection of the sexual underworld of Victorian society. Largely through the use of cross-dressing, Churchill challenges and ridicules the accepted notions of Victorian morality and behaviour by inverting the assumption that what people look like and wear are straightforward indicators of who they are or what they are feeling. So Betty, the embodiment of what "a wife should be", is played by a bearded man, her son by a woman. Throughout Act I characters are rarely permitted to have sex with either the individual or the gender they desire, and the action culminates in the face-saving marriage between the lesbian governess and the intrepid gay explorer. Queen Victoria's model household is a fantasy, a flimsy front for confused morals and anarchic sexuality. Churchill's solution is to liberate the characters by transporting them into the permissive 1970s, because only now, *Cloud Nine* intimates, can clothes be truly compatible with gender and sexuality. In this instance, as in the

final sequences of Potter's *Orlando*, the analogy between present and past is made explicit through direct juxtaposition.

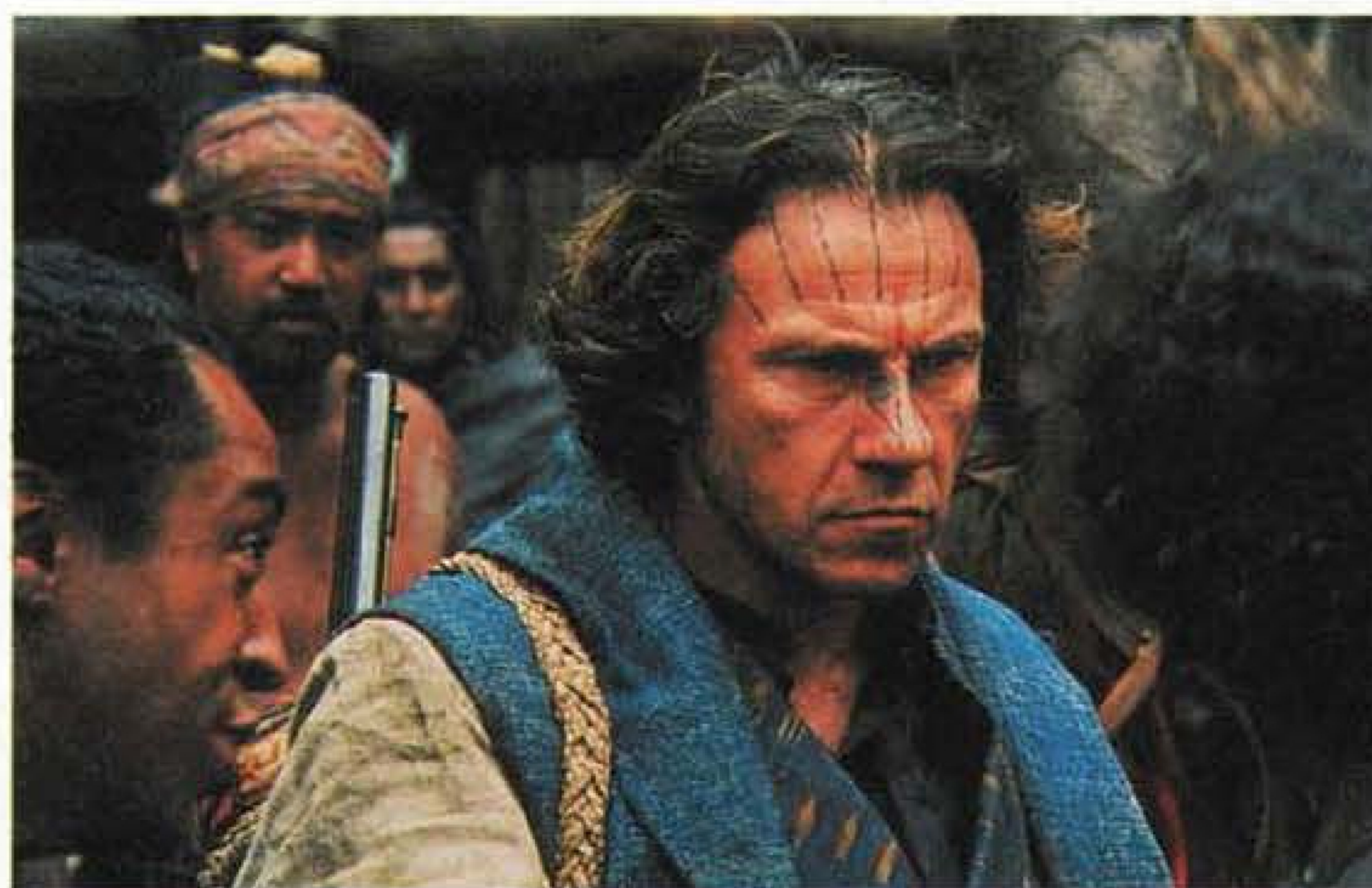
The Piano enters into a much more complex dialogue with women's sexual histories, since the present-day consciousness remains embedded exclusively within the nineteenth-century narrative. The sexual experiences of the three protagonists – Ada, Baines and Stewart – are markedly different; Stewart, the stiff, bourgeois gentleman, represents respectability and ignorance, while Ada and Baines epitomise radicalism and liberation. Stewart, like head of household Clive in *Cloud Nine*, is frustrated by how far he is from unlocking the 'mystery' of sexuality and remains unable to break free of his social and gender stereotype. He is left stranded, yearning but unable to deal with the reality of closeness. We do not feel for Clive as his servant cocks his rifle and aims at him, but Stewart's isolation is painful. By the end, he realises that with Baines Ada has discovered an intimacy he, frozen in his social role, will always be excluded from. At this point, the only option he can see is violence: he hurls Ada against the wall and hacks off her finger when she refuses to deny her love for Baines.

Stewart's first appearance in the film – at the head of the welcoming party to greet his ►

Language of clothes

● Janet Patterson, costume designer. It was important to set up contrasts between the rivals for Ada's love so we used the language of clothes to set up a number of distinctions. We agreed that Baines should be a very international person in nineteenth-century terms; a whaler and traveller who would have picked up his clothes along the way. Baines has given up his culture; he's not a Pakeha (white New Zealander) nor a Maori; instead he's somehow suspended between the two, though inclined more towards the latter, evident from the tattoos on his face. He has gone bush and has a strong relationship with the Maori people.

We worked with colours to make Baines look more eccentric than Stewart. The bright blue indigo shirt and woven vest were bought in France; this type of nineteenth-century shirt worn by people who handle animals at the markets could have been picked up during his travels (though New Zealand was briefly a French settlement before full English colonisation began). We tried to be as authentic as possible, down to minute details such as the scrimshaw buttons (a craft



started by illiterate whalers who fashioned bone into utilitarian objects like buttons and knife handles and scratched designs which were filled in with ink, like etching).

Stewart, on the other hand, is rigid and awkward, which we accentuated by making his clothes too small to make him more uncomfortably uptight. Particularly in the scene when he first goes to meet Ada, his

clothes are not a good fit. However, in the bush in his workclothes – roomy linens – he is more at ease.

● Andrew McAlpine, production designer. Noriko Watanabe (wife of Sam Neill), a third-generation make-up artist from Japan, did an extraordinary job in hair and make-up, which included tattooing, a long-standing tradition in Japan, quite similar to that of the Maoris.



Quiet, dark power

● Janet Patterson, costume designer. Jane and I felt that the romanticised look of a lot of period films would be quite inappropriate for 'The Piano'. So we tried to work tonally with the incongruities of the landscape to explore the more likely reality.

The language of costume is crucial to establishing character. Ada was not a showy woman, but a quiet dark power. So we were looking for dark fabrics in natural fibres and weaves. The close relationship between mother and daughter is established immediately through colour and dress; the colours identical or harmonious, matching bonnets – like peas in a pod on arrival – Flora a diminutive version of her mother. This merging implies that Flora is an extension of her mother's identity and an interpreter of Ada's inner self to the world.

There is a point of departure in the script when Ada insists on visiting Baines alone and Flora, hurt at being locked out of her mother's life, feels a sense of betrayal. We reflected this change in a separation in costumes, with Flora bonnetless, dressed in lighter colours. They don't line up again visually until the end.



Parody acts

● Andrew McAlpine, production designer. The *Bluebeard* concert provided us with wonderful imaginative licence. Jane was intrigued by a form of drama from our childhood in New Zealand, that of the shadow play, which is still very popular in parts of Asia, especially Indonesia. The inspiration came from a small Victorian photograph of women's heads peeping through a hole in a curtain, which led Jane to look for some bit of theatre as relief.

● Stuart Dryburgh, lighting designer. Without this episode and other moments of relief provided by the crazy aunts, the film would have been so hard-driven as to be unwatchable. I had more freedom here, but

I still wanted to follow the lighting conventions of the time, so we used the tray of candles that Nessie is carrying as the main source. In other sequences from the concert we cheated a bit – for example, the magic lantern was probably brighter than it would have been in those days. During the concert we used one of the film's few wide shots: a conventional audience point of view which we generally avoided since Jane didn't want to release the tension of following Ada's story. Yet the scene also had a more serious dramatic significance: in the midst of the chaos and hilarity of the Maori disruptions there is an important silent interlude in the audience, where Ada is seated between Stewart and Baines. Ada pointedly refuses to let Baines get too close, driving him away as she takes Stewart's hand.

◀ new wife – is in his muddled formal dark suit and top hat. He is embarrassed and puzzled to discover Ada and Flora sheltering under the hoops and underskirt, and awkwardly commences his rehearsed greeting. Images of a furtive, frustrated gentleman at a peep show spring to mind as Campion distances him from the female sexuality he can never understand or get close to through a series of classic male voyeur images: squinting through a camera eyepiece at Ada posing unhappily in her wedding dress, or sneaking a glance at her making love to Baines through the cracks in the walls or between the floorboards.

'Picnic At Hanging Rock'

Stewart is clearly identified as a rigid masculine figure marooned in what becomes a feminine world. For much of the time he inhabits a different film from Ada. Stewart's sensibility and world view is closer to that of another Australasian Victorian costume drama, Peter Weir's *Picnic At Hanging Rock* (1975), in which three schoolgirls mysteriously disappear while on a Valentine's Day picnic. Here female sexuality is also consistently symbolised through clothes, but the film is built on the mystery rather than the attainment of female sexuality. Unable to articulate their desire, the men in the film become deviant voyeurs, transferring their sexual desire from the girls to their virginal dresses. Thus the dirty scrap of lace which the youthful Michael discovers during the search is invested with sexually charged significance, as is the fact that one girl is subsequently found "intact" minus her corset. *Picnic At Hanging Rock* is the crystallisation of the Victorian man's perception of intimacy as unobtainable, bewildering, and fascinating.

In *The Piano* Stewart's predicament is more ambiguous. Denied intimacy, he ultimately unleashes his pent-up sexuality by attempting to rape Ada in the woods. Ada struggles, falls over her skirts and is pulled to the ground. She seems defeated, but is eventually saved by her cumbersome, all-enveloping clothes. Stewart's aggression is deflected by the symbol of Victorian femininity – the hooped skirt – and she escapes. In one of the few scenes when he is alone with his wife, Ada awakens Stewart's desire by skimming his chest with the back of her hand, but when he asks to touch her she recoils. The following night, as Ada strokes his back and buttocks, it is Stewart who wants to stop. What sets Stewart apart from the men in *Picnic At Hanging Rock* is that he reaches the painful point of realising that there is more to sexual contact than sneaking glimpses, frustrated brutality and being touched.

Much of *The Piano* depicts a life which conforms to Stewart's masculine perception. New Zealand may have been the first country to grant women the vote, but little of this liberalism is manifested in the first part of the film. Often Ada is as quintessentially the Victorian woman as Stewart is the Victorian man; on the beach in the first scene, for example, she looks like a doll beneath the exaggerated hugeness of her travelling outfit and lampshade bonnet. Women's clothes are presented as constricting, ugly, absurd; the multiple skirts which trip Ada

and Flora as they trudge through the mud, and which make it ludicrously difficult for Aunt Morag to relieve herself when "caught short" in the woods. Clothes seem liberating only when they come off, as when Flora dances and cartwheels across the beach in her petticoat. That is, until Ada starts to fall in love with Baines.

In this relationship, the modernity of Campion's response to the past dominates, the potential for sexual expression is realised, and clothes are no longer socially determined. Physically Baines is Stewart's opposite: he never appears dressed as a colonial master and his face is pricked with Maoriesque markings. It is this unconventionality which frees Ada.

The relationship begins when Baines saves Ada's prized piano by intimating a desire to learn how to play. The instrument is brought to his hut, and Stewart tells Ada she is to instruct him. Baines' fascination is not with learning, but with watching Ada play, so a bizarre bargain is struck whereby Ada is allowed to play and win back her piano, while he is permitted to watch, to touch and gradually to undress her. As spectators it is clear that we are entering – or rather intruding on – an intensely private world. This intrusion begins one evening after the piano has arrived at Baines' hut: Baines gets up from his bed, removes his shirt and, naked, uses it indulgently to dust the piano, circling it, judging it, getting to know it. Baines considers himself alone, we really shouldn't be there, but we are intrigued by the ritual.

In this formal Victorian world, Harvey Keitel's proud nakedness is both shocking and liberating. Convention is inverted as the man is constructed as a sexual being before the woman. We the audience find ourselves privy to a private dialogue which imbues clothes with a potency beyond the bounds of fetishism and makes what follows an elaborate seduction rather than a cheap strip. This is partly due to the scenes' curious rhythm, a slow but relentless evolution as Ada reworks and refines repeated musical refrains while Baines tells her when to stop, what garment to remove or when he wants to kiss her or lie with her in response to a complex set of rules agreed beforehand. The rich obscurity of the clothes-language is counterbalanced by an incongruous matter-of-factness that puts the relationship on a different plane from anything else.

The language has to do with the sensuality of clothes: how they feel, smell and look, not just what they might signify, as in *Picnic At*

Hanging Rock. Thus Baines' rapture can be contained within the minute act of smelling and burying his face in one of Ada's garments while she remains wrapped in her music. Campion's fascination with clothes is reminiscent of that described by the seventeenth-century poet and priest Robert Herrick, whose illicit passion for Julia is displaced on to her clothes – her lace is "erring", and beneath her "tempestuous petticoat" lurks "a careless shoestring in whose tie/ I see a wild civility." Herrick creates a clothes-eroticism so enticing that Julia becomes insignificant by comparison.

In *The Piano*, the point is not that the clothes are substitutes for Ada, but that they are part of her and her body's sensuality. Perhaps the film's most erotically charged moment is when Baines, crouched under the piano, discovers a tiny hole in Ada's stocking and slowly caresses it, skin touching skin. Later, when Ada is sitting at the piano in just her bodice and skirt, Baines stands behind her naked to the waist and glides his hands across her bare shoulders. Again the camera acts in collusion with the characters, skirting around them as Baines circles Ada, picking up the charge between them. Ada and Baines are gradually becoming equals, as the traditional striptease relationship of one person clothed watching another undress is supplanted. When they finally have sex, they undress together.

Intimate clothes

Why is this secret language not ludicrous like the adolescent heavings of *Picnic At Hanging Rock* or the misguided gay advances of *Cloud Nine*? The strength of the affair in the *The Piano* lies in Ada's responsiveness; she is no longer the passive Victorian woman, acted upon rather than acting. At first she remains wary and resentful of Baines' bargain, yet she gradually discovers that the relationship can offer her the freedom she, with her mute defiance, had been holding out for. Yet this is not an easy realisation: when Ada returns to Baines' hut having already acknowledged that she loves him, she slaps his cheek and pummels his chest before they kiss, as if she needs to repel him as she repelled Stewart. Then they have sex.

The relationship with Baines is the catalyst to Ada's sensual awakening. When she arrived in New Zealand her piano was her only liberation; she had not spoken since she was six and she had been married off to a stranger. Through *The Piano* Ada discovers the means to articulate what she wants – firstly through constructing an intimacy around clothes, through choosing Baines over Stewart, choosing not to be drowned by her sinking piano, and finally choosing to learn to speak when she and Baines have started a new life together in Nelson. The closing image is of a woman attached to the piano by a taut rope like a graceful helium balloon; beautiful in death but silent. But however momentarily enticing this ocean death may be, Ada chooses to reject it and to live. *The Piano* is primarily but not exclusively Ada's liberation; it is also the reclamation of women's desires, the sexual personae which the past silenced. *'The Piano'* is at the NFT on 26 October, with Jane Campion in interview, and opens on 29 October



Peeping Tom: Sam Neill as Stewart

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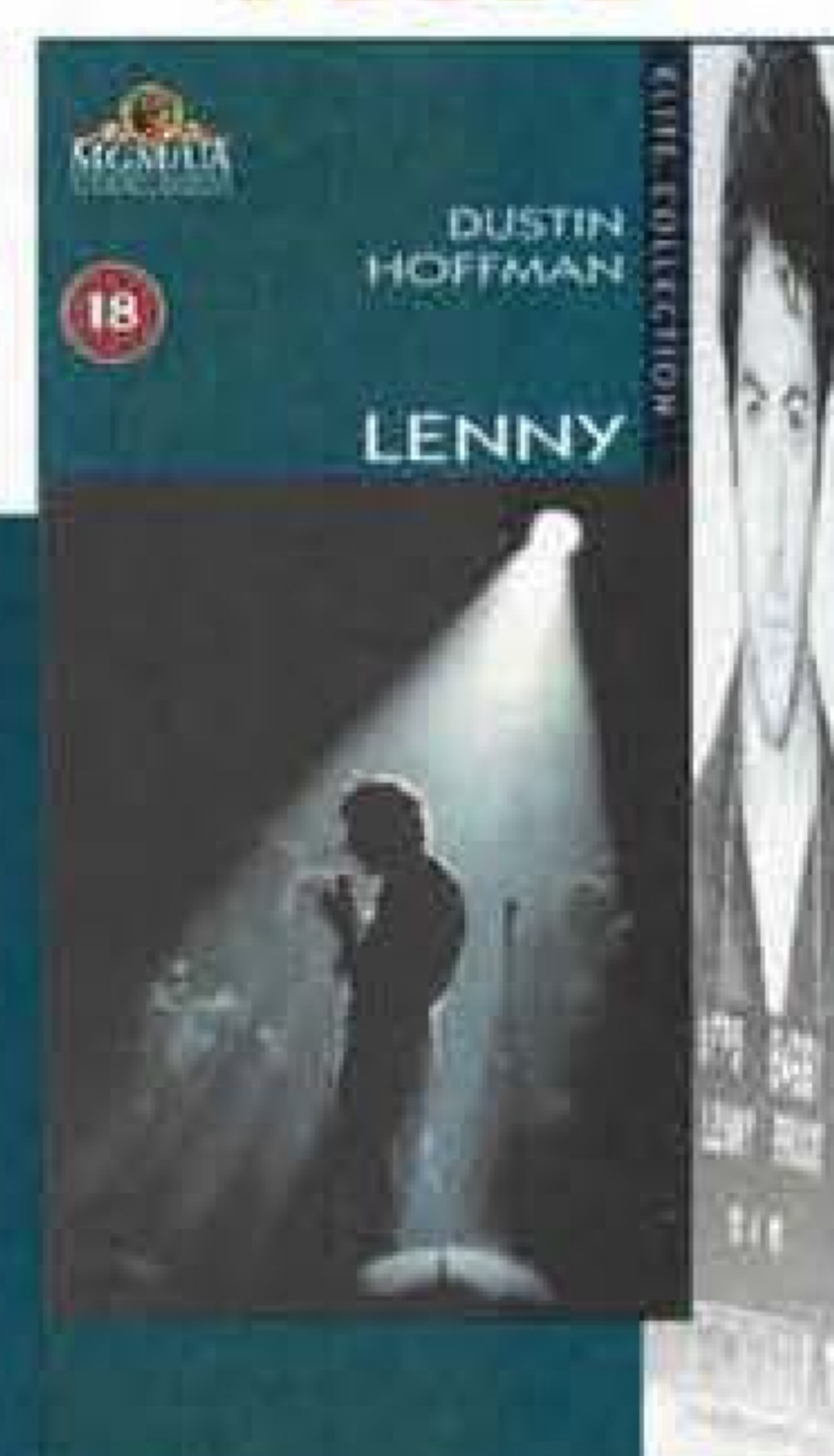
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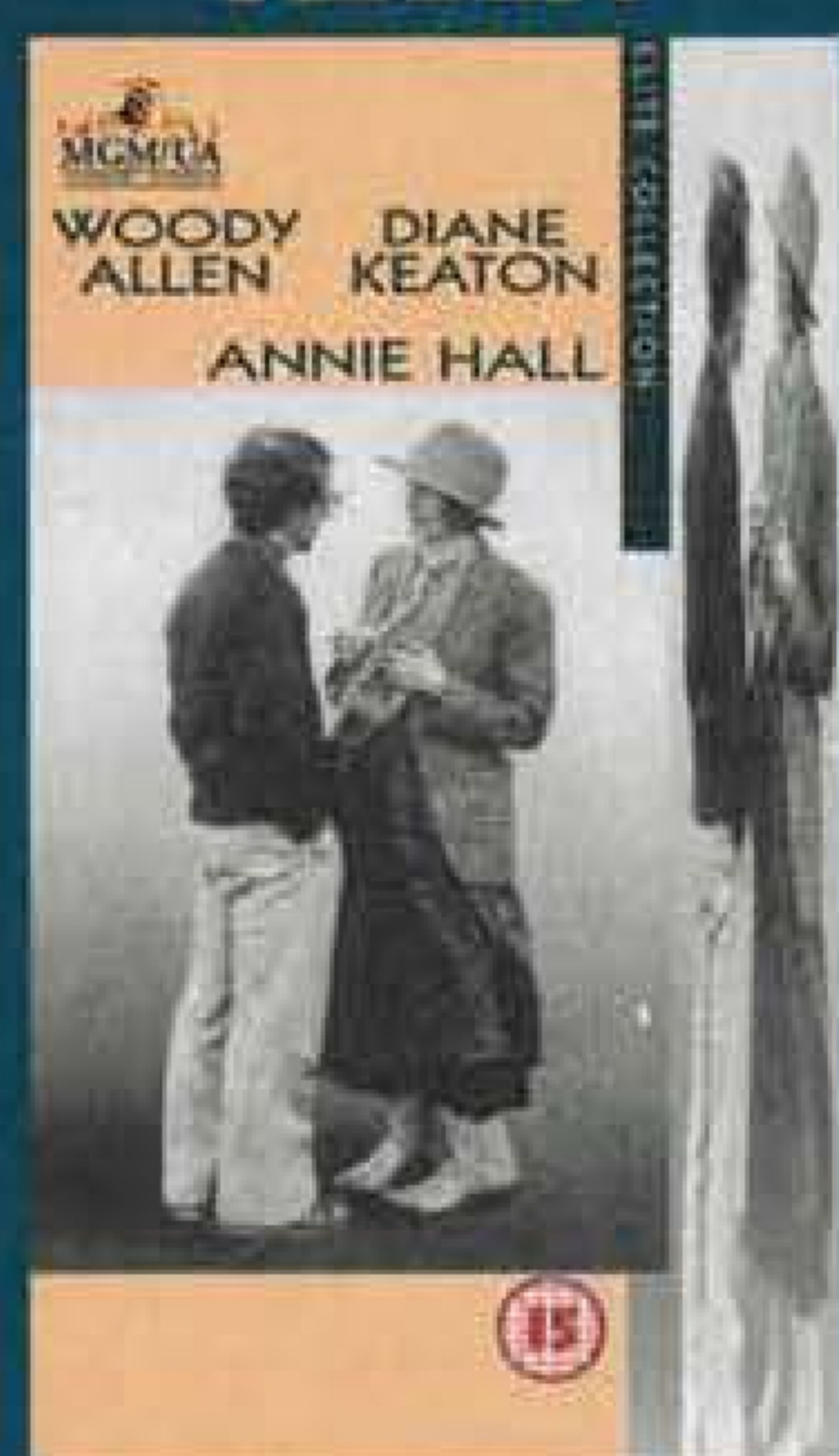
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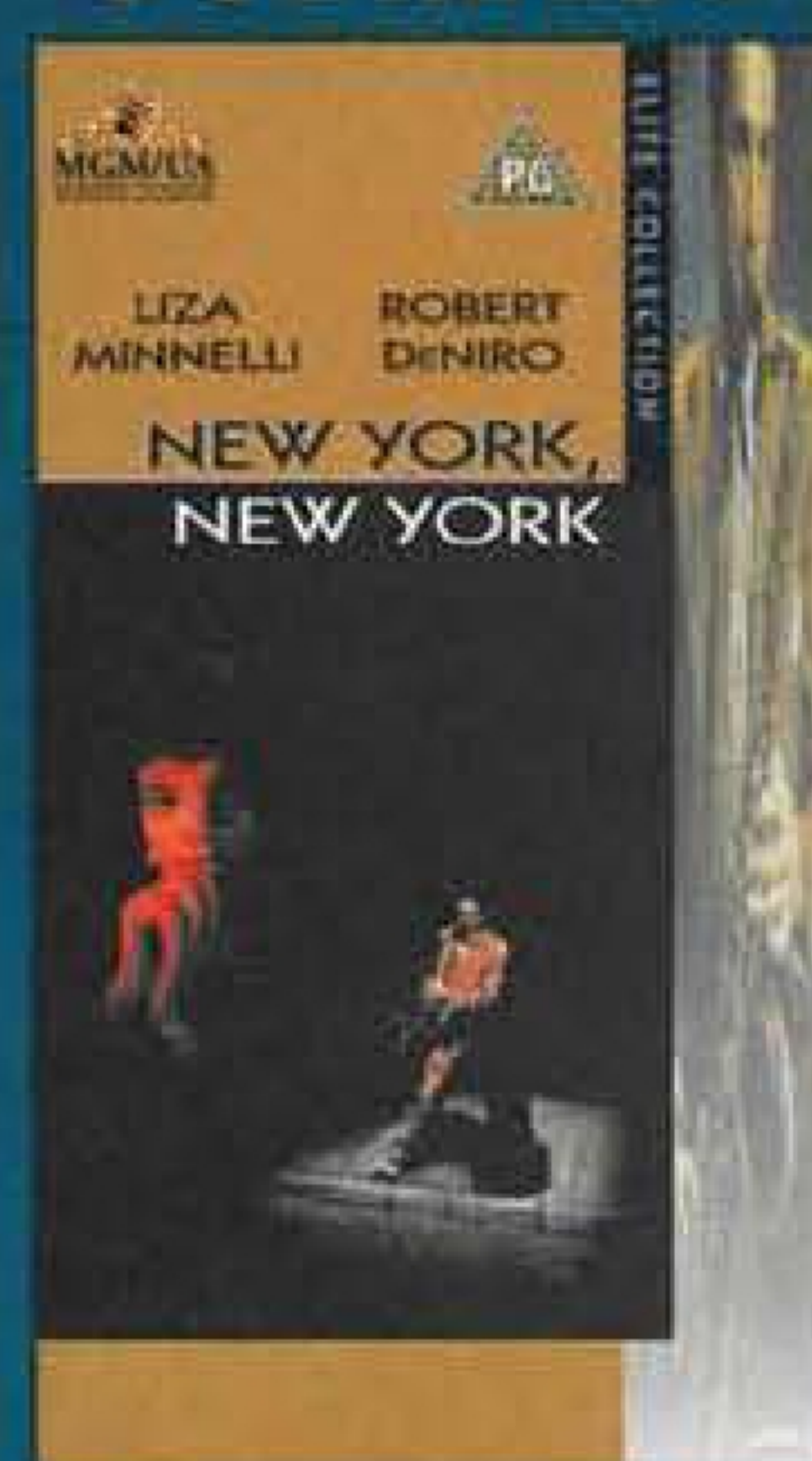
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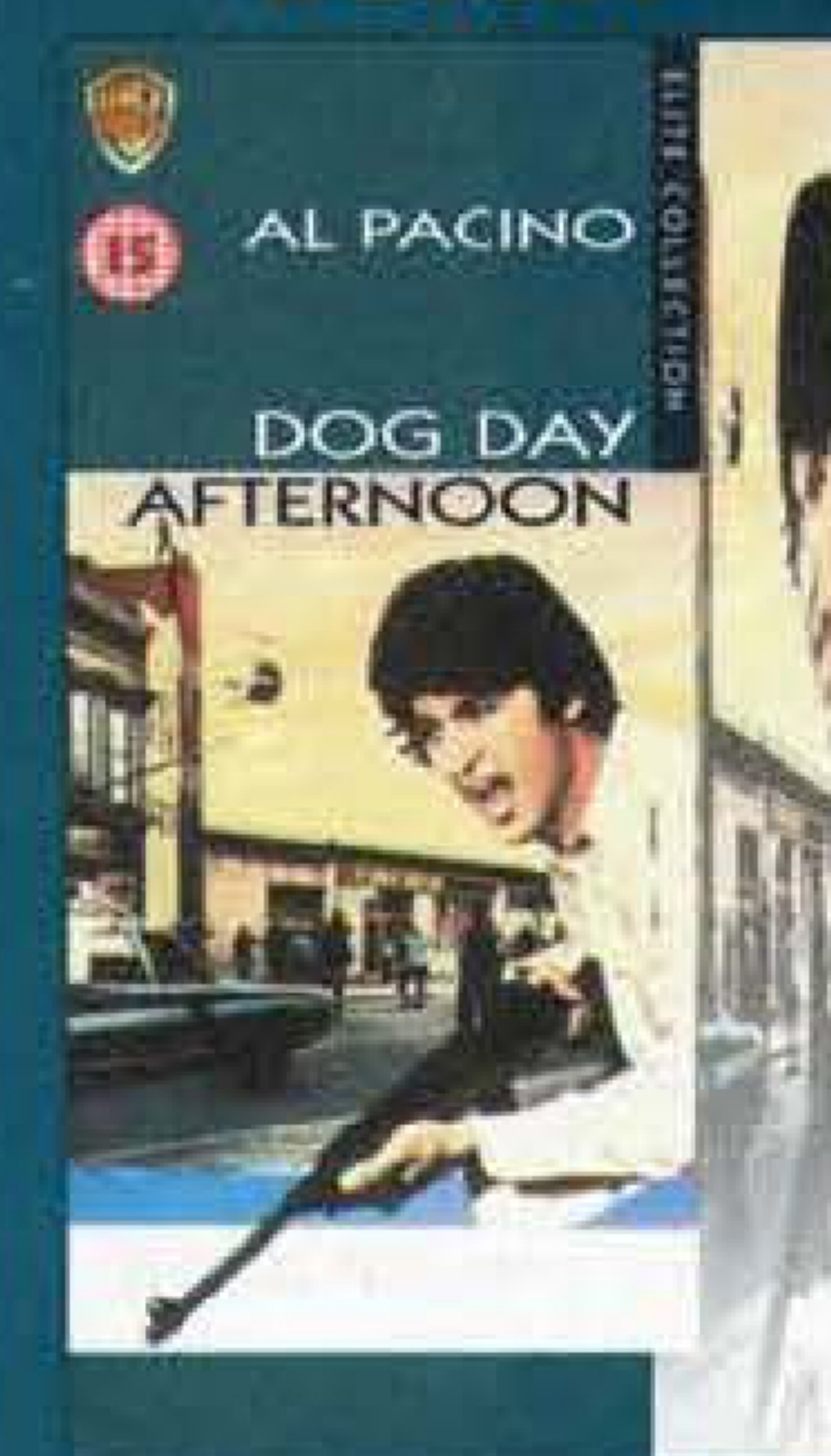
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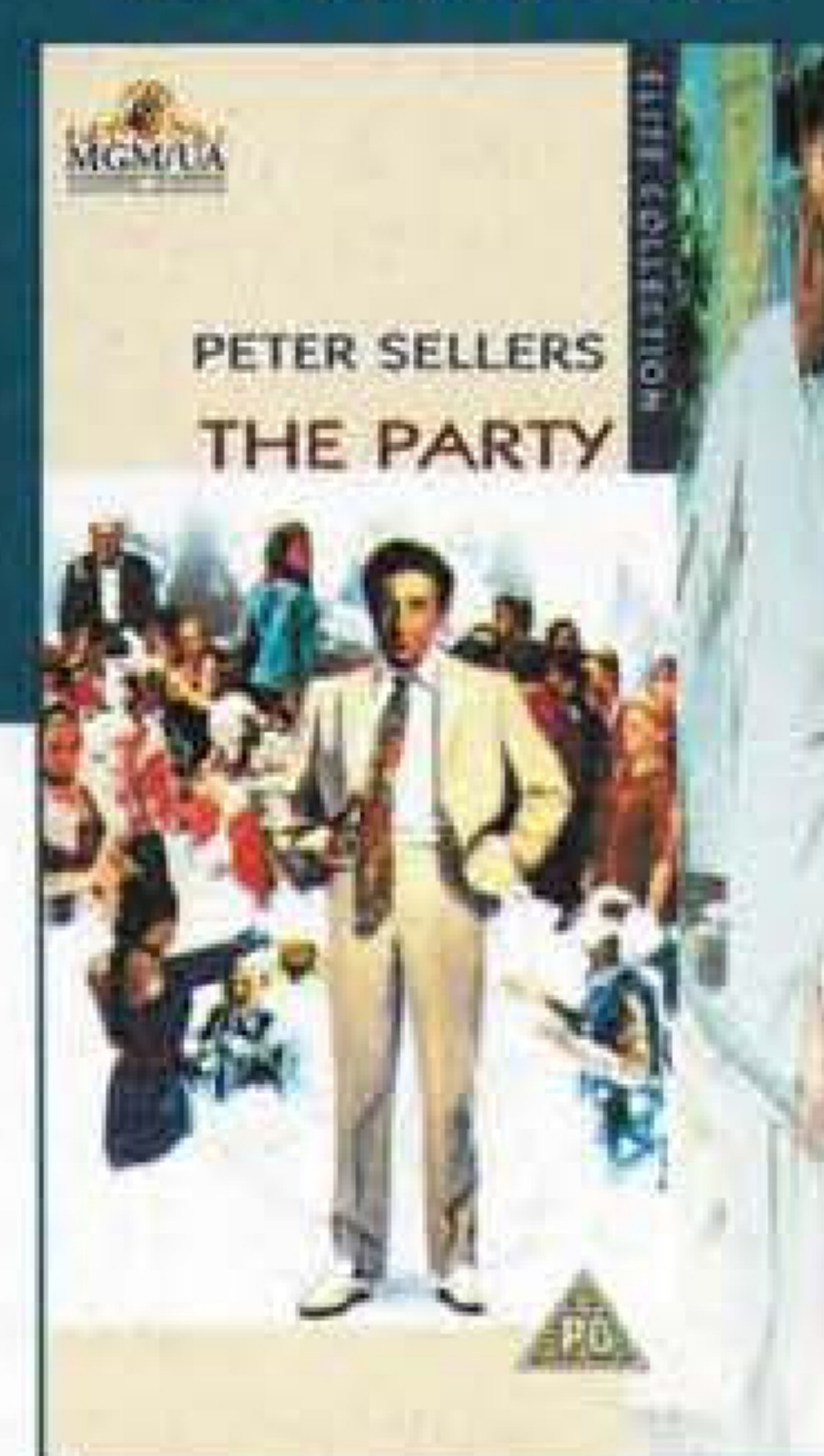
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● "There is a shadow world – here in Los Angeles, in Honolulu, in New York. Most of the time you're never aware of it. We live in our regular American world, walking American streets, and we never notice that right alongside our world is a second world. Very discreet, very private."

Consider the above excerpt. It could be a passage from a late 40s penny-dreadful about the "strange twilight urges" of the "homosexual underground". Or perhaps it's from a McCarthy-era thriller warning of the communist menace. Or a sci-fi epic detailing the sinister game plans of extra-terrestrial body snatchers.

The truth is, it is a combination of all three. For the queers/commies/Martians referred to in this extract from the novel *Rising Sun* are the Japanese. And as author Michael Crichton makes abundantly clear in his 1992 bestseller – now brought to the screen in slightly altered form by director Philip Kaufman – their "shadow world" is the most treacherous of them all.

"We've lost too many basic industries to Japan," Crichton anxiously informs the reader, "steel and ship-building in the 60s, television and computer chips in the 70s, machine tools in the 80s." And now, as if that weren't enough, "they" are about to take over "our" women! True, the women in question may be high-priced hookers rather than the naïve school-girls usually commandeered into 'white slavery' in sensationalist pulp fiction. But Crichton is no less alarmed that sinister foreign forces have conspired to ensure that these women are no longer "part of our American world", but rather are "part of the shadow world available only to the Japanese".

Rising Sun is ostensibly about a pair of detectives investigating the murder of one such Asian-tainted tootsie strangled during a sexual encounter in the empty boardroom of a Japanese-owned, Los Angeles-based corporation while a lavish party is in progress downstairs. But even the least careful reader should realise after a few pages that the book's 'police procedural' mystery trappings are fake. The dialogue that supposedly propels the story forward, between wise in the ways of the mysterious east detective John Connor (Sean Connery) and his less Asian-informed partner Web Smith (Wesley Snipes), could be better described as a monologue by Crichton. In fact, *Rising Sun* barely qualifies as fiction at all. It is a 355-page rant followed by an editorial afterword and a three-page bibliography. Yet surprisingly few reviewers of the book have been willing to go any further than to indict it for "Japan-bashing", and few of the film's critics (Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* a happy exception) have scored it for anything more than dramatic slackness and the playing-by-numbers of its stars.

In one sense it is easy to understand such journalistic caution. Crichton has constructed his polemic with no small degree of care, not shifting into paranoid overdrive until the half-way point. And Kaufman, by altering a few

From 'The Mask of Fu Manchu' to 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles', and now 'Rising Sun', the Japanese have been the objects of US paranoia. By David Ehrenstein

WAR BUSINESS

minor details of the plot, has at least gone through the motions of being (in his words) "sensitive to any charges of racism". After all, disapproval of the Japan-US trade imbalance cannot automatically be equated with xenophobia. Likewise, advancing the notion that America has misunderstood the nature of the foreign competition Japan represents does not, in and of itself, constitute alarmist rhetoric. But when Crichton begins to drop pointed asides about the Japanese being the "masters of indirect action" and "masters of the smear job", and the film portrays them as sleek thugs obsessed with even sleeker white call girls, it's clear that something well beyond knee-jerk protectionist hysteria is involved.

"Japan has never accepted Freud or Christianity," Crichton's chief investigator declares off-handedly after he has grilled a prime suspect. "They've never been guilty or embarrassed about sex. No problem with homosexuality, no problem with kinky sex." Japanese lesbians and gays, who face social strictures every bit as dire as those in the west, will be surprised by this. In fact, any number of Crichton's ostentatious demonstrations of 'expertise' in matters Asian are open to question. But these are minor quibbles compared to *Rising Sun*'s view of the Japanese as supreme libertines, a point driven home in an off-hand remark by one of the book's "shadow world" *demi-mondaines*: "A lot of them, they are so polite, so correct, but then they get turned on, they have this... this way."

Pre-emptive strike

Is it so difficult to see what's going on here? The Japanese "way" is plainly at one with the sexual prowess supposedly possessed by blacks and the purported desire of Jews for the blood of Gentile children, the better to perform the ritual sacrifices believed to be the key to their vast economic power. There's a simple word for such sweeping cultural characterisations: racism. But as anyone who has been paying attention to the mass media over the past decade knows, racism is an increasingly dangerous thing to bring up in public. To do so is to leave oneself

open to the countercharge of 'political correctness' – that brand of so-called liberal oversensitivity that media pundits and political commentators of the right to middle of the spectrum never tire of decrying as worse than racism itself.

Though it began life in the late 70s as a term of left-wing self-mockery, political correctness was taken up by the right in the 80s when multiculturalism – that movement designed to teach the histories and contributions of non-white peoples – emerged on US college campuses. In his book *An Illiberal Education*, right-wing foundation-funded propagandist D'Nesh D'Souza denounced multiculturalism as political correctness and its proponents as thought police intent on eradicating the matchless cultural contributions of white heterosexual European males. Though his 15 minutes of fame soon passed, the term D'Souza promulgated has persisted to this day as a means of silencing any opposition to the status quo, in particular with regard to race. Consequently when Asian-American activist groups began to make enquiries about how *Rising Sun* would be adapted to the screen, it was no surprise to find the familiar catch-phrase being wielded once more.

"It's unrealistic to expect a 'politically correct' view of Japan," announced Rebecca Mundy, public affairs director of the Japan America Friendship Foundation, the international trade promotion organisation that 20th Century Fox hired to handle protests against the film. "That's not what art is about." "Watchdog groups are necessary," noted *Rising Sun* producer Peter Kaufman (son of the director) in the same *Los Angeles Times* article, "but there's always the danger that they'll turn into 'thought police'."

Crichton, except for a simple denial of racist intent, has had surprisingly little to say in defence of *Rising Sun* as book or film. But perhaps no response is necessary given the following pre-emptive strike, cleverly woven into the text. "The Japanese are the most racist people on the planet," Crichton's hero lectures us towards the book's end. "That's why they're always accusing

everybody else of racism. They're so prejudiced, they assume everybody else must be, too." In other words, *their* racism is so extreme that no one should object to anything Crichton has to say about them – even if what he has to say is racist.

One wonders how Crichton divined that the Japanese deserved to be placed higher up racism's top ten than, say, white South Africans. Thoughts turn to the Japanese film-maker Nagisa Oshima's relentless criticism of his countrymen's racism in *The Catch*, *Death by Hanging*, *Three Resurrected Drunkards*, *Dear Summer Sister* and *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*. By Crichton's reckoning, such films shouldn't be conceivable. The scathing criticism of Japanese corporate chicanery advanced by Juzo Itami in his *A Taxing Woman* and *A Taxing Woman's Return* likewise make Crichton's broadsides seem amateurish. And that's not to mention Itami's apparent indifference to the ritual aspects of Japanese life that *Rising Sun* incessantly promotes as essential to understanding the supposed difference between east and west.

But Oshima and Itami are directors of 'art' films, seen and appreciated by the few. Michael Crichton is an internationally known bestselling author whose works have frequently been turned into major Hollywood movies. He has successfully written and directed several projects of his own, including *Westworld* and *Coma*. His last novel *Jurassic Park* – brought to the screen by Steven Spielberg – has within a few weeks of its release become one of the highest-grossing films of all time. In short, Crichton has something more on his side than the right of free speech as spelled out in the First Amendment to the Constitution – he has the power to put across virtually anything he wishes to say on a global basis to a massive number of readers and moviegoers.

Wake-up call to America

It doesn't take any special literary or artistic talent to write a book – or make a film – like *Rising Sun*. As America continues to reel through an economic recession-cum-depression, the demand for a scapegoat steadily increases. Who better than the Japanese to take the rap? An America that has so adamantly refused to come to grips with its racist and genocidal past in Southeast Asia is not about to deal honestly with the overweening 'defence' spending, junk-bond profiteering and savings-and-loan debacles that have brought it to near economic ruin. How much simpler to direct our rage at an enemy whose products we are no longer disposed to buy in massive quantities.

In 1982 a Chinese-American auto worker was murdered by attackers who mistook him for a Japanese. The attackers were acquitted. Last year a Japanese exchange student on his way to a Halloween party (dressed as John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever*) was shot at point-blank range by a Louisiana man whose doorbell he rang by mistake. This gunman was also acquitted. Add

to these the African-American community's continuing embroglios with Korean shopkeepers in inner-city neighbourhoods and the general hysteria over 'illegal' (non-white) aliens crossing 'our borders', and you have an American zeitgeist that is not merely receptive to the likes of *Rising Sun*, but panting for it.

But today's Hollywood prefers to keep controversy within limits. The industry may have been founded on the blatant racism of *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and in 1943 have produced the all-stops-out Second World War anti-Japanese propaganda programmer *Behind the Rising Sun* (the film that spawned the immortal phrase "Die, Yankee dog!"), but now such projects wouldn't get past the development stage. So while *Rising Sun* might look risky on paper, find the right director to smooth over its more problematic passages, hold the opposition at bay by wrapping yourself in the First Amendment, and you've got an exploitable property of the first order.

And who better for the job than Philip Kaufman, the quasi-independent auteur whose credits include *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, *Henry & June*, and *The Right Stuff*? Taste is his middle name. Besides, he can't go on making succès d'estimes forever – this could be his *Silence of the Lambs*. But there was one tiny glitch in all this – Michael Crichton.

Fairly early in the production process Crichton with scriptwriter Michael Backes (prominently noted in the novel's acknowledgments) withdrew from the film, having taken issue with the direction Kaufman was taking. In that Crichton and Backes have never gone on record as to the exact nature of their objections, it was left to the press to guess. But if Crichton's stated objective in the novel was to make a "wake-up call to America" about the Japanese menace, one can hardly imagine him to be completely displeased with Kaufman's film. It may rouse the rabble less feverishly, but it gets the job done all the same.

Kaufman's revisions cut Crichton's soap-box speeches on the evils of the Japanese to a minimum; changed the identity of the murderer from Asian to white; replaced one of the book's white detectives with a black one; and renamed computer whizz Theresa Akasuma, Jingo Akasuma and made her the love interest of both detective heroes. None of these changes amounts to much. The removal of most of Crichton's anti-Japanese arias makes *Rising Sun* slightly less hectoring on screen than on the page. The altering of the murderer's identity matters little since the Japanese are presented as unscrupulous and untrustworthy in any case. The film may make them technically innocent of committing the murder, but their capacity for such a crime (the victim's lover refers to her as "a piece of sushi") is never in doubt.

As for the casting of Sean Connery, while his character may have been designed by Crichton from the start to cash in on this particular actor's sexily

avuncular appeal (not only is his character's name – Connor – an abbreviation of his own, but the actor's mellifluous burr seems to leap off every one of Crichton's pages), the results are far from pleasant. Just as he did in *The Name of the Rose* (his last sub-standard performance) Connery struts across the screen as a preening Mr Know-it-All, regarding both his co-star Wesley Snipes and his Japanese adversaries as annoyances far beneath his lofty station – ants disturbing the picnic of his supposedly irresistible persona. Rarely has the white man's burden been given such a overweeningly narcissistic spin.

As egregious as *Rising Sun*'s brand of race-baiting may seem, in the overall history of Hollywood it is more the rule than the exception. From *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, *Shanghai Express*, *Thirteen Women* and the *Charlie Chan* series to *The Deer Hunter*, *Black Rain*, *The Last Emperor* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, Hollywood has provided little more than an endless parade of stereotypes. Regardless of their country of origin – Japan, China, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, or the Philippines – Hollywood Asians are always mysterious and all-powerful one moment, comically awkward the next, and sinisterly sexual overall. There is no indication that the industry has the slightest interest in treating Asians as human beings. In fact, in the face of the protests over *Ris-*

ing Sun, the industry has turned more defensive than ever.

In a story widely reported in the US press at the time of the film's release, Lan Nguyen, a Vietnamese doctoral student at USC, was told on the telephone that a *Rising Sun* preview she had been invited to was full – only to be admitted when she called back giving an Anglo name. Perhaps she shouldn't have been surprised by this, or by the strong-arm tactics the studio used when she and other Asian members of the audience were forced into leaving the auditorium during a post-screening question and answer session.

As far as Hollywood is concerned, her objections were unwarranted. The studio was just doing its job – just doing business. And as Michael Crichton so insistently reminds us in *Rising Sun*, "business is war."

Epilogue: a Samurai in Hollywood

The 12 September 1991 issue of the *New Yorker*, shortly before Tina Brown took over the magazine's editorship, contained an article by Connie Buck entitled 'Leap of Faith'. An account of the acquisition of MCA by Matsushita, one of Japan's oldest and largest electronics firms, Buck's article centred on the figure of Michael Ovitz, the president of Creative Artists Agency (CAA). Widely considered to be the most powerful man in Hollywood, Ovitz had

taken the unprecedented step of brokering the deal between two giant international corporations, something no talent agent in show business history had done before.

With their extraordinary client list – a virtual *Who's Who* of stars, writers and directors – CAA and its president have been the talk of the town for close to a decade. When *Rain Man* swept the Academy Awards in 1988 for Best Picture, Actor, Director and Screenplay, many of the millions watching doubtless wondered why Michael Ovitz – a name that didn't appear on *Rain Man*'s credits – was on every Oscar-winner's lips. But as everyone in Hollywood knew, it was Ovitz's capacity to bring together top talents such as Dustin Hoffman, Tom Cruise and Barry Levinson that made the picture possible. As *Rain Man* proves, Ovitz has acquired the sort of power that makes him the equal, if not the superior, of the fabled studio heads of old.

His brokering of the Matsushita/MCA deal, Buck explains, was designed to put Ovitz on a new plateau within the industry. He was no mere agent now, but a major player, moving into uncharted waters. More interesting still, Buck claims, was the fact that the standards Ovitz was setting had little to do with Hollywood and everything to do with his all-consuming passion for Japan.

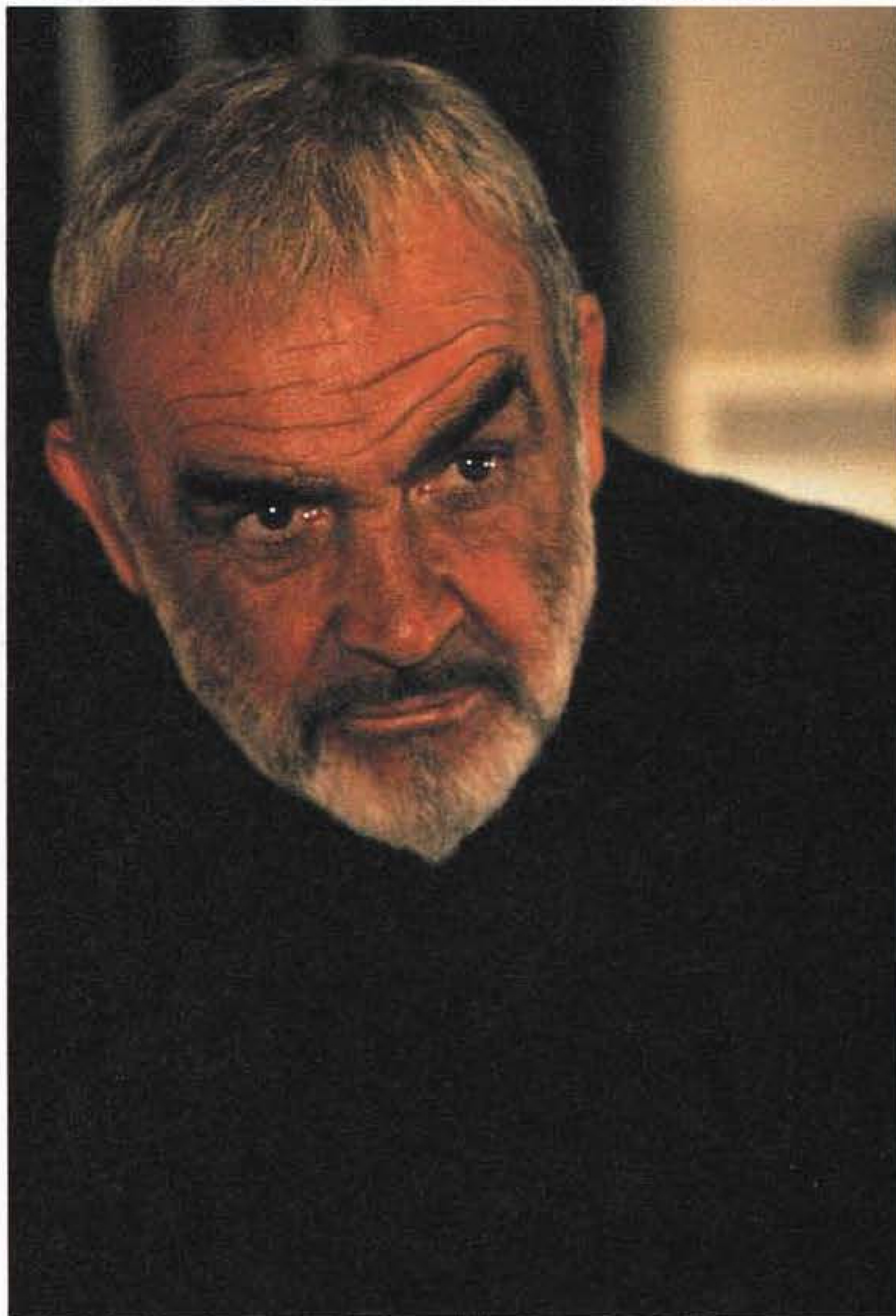
Ovitz, whose regimen, according to the article, "includes an hour of aikido at dawn", and who arms each of his agents with a copy of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, "sees himself as the embodiment and apotheosis of Japanese culture in this industry... he believes that the Japanese like and respect the fact that he understands them so well." Soon after its completion, news of the deal – and of Ovitz's role in it – became the subject of considerable press attention. *Time*'s coverage featured a sidebar devoted entirely to Ovitz, quoting colleagues who described him as "an economic samurai".

Today it is impossible to read Buck's article without thinking of *Rising Sun*. In one sense, Ovitz embodies the ideal Crichton claims Americans should strive for. By immersing himself in Japanese culture, as does Crichton's hero Connor, he is positioned to do business with these wily foreigners on level ground. Yet in another sense Ovitz stands for everything that most enrages Crichton. After all, he is selling a major American company to Japanese invaders. Michael Crichton, Philip Kaufman, Sean Connery and Wesley Snipes are all CAA clients.

Two queries: if Ovitz is as beholden to the Japanese as he appears, why did he allow the film of *Rising Sun* to be made? And more important: if Michael Crichton believes what he says in *Rising Sun*, why is Michael Ovitz still acting as his agent?

Don't expect any easy answers. After all, this is Hollywood – a "shadow world" where everything is "very discreet, very private".

'Rising Sun' opens on 15 October and is reviewed on page 51 of this issue



A lofty station: Sean Connery gives his white man's burden a narcissistic spin

The release of 'What's Love Got to Do With It' and the promise of a biopic about Keith Moon raise the question: can film capture the life of rock music? By Cynthia Rose

● Even when their subject is less stellar than Tina Turner, rock biopics set themselves an almost impossible task. Not only do they compete with real people, sounds and collective memories. Not only do they use one medium to render another. They also deal with one of America's most strangely powerful exports. One which, in addition to functioning perfectly well in its own right, already uses film as a means of self-promotion.

What can film tell about rock – about the illusions it nurses, the bargains it requires, the epiphanies it can deliver – that rock itself does not reveal? One answer can be found in the fact that the best films about rock are not star biopics. Penelope Spheeris' *The Boys Next Door*, Jonathan Kaplan's *Over the Edge*, Adrian Lyne's *Foxes* and Tim Hunter's *River's Edge* are all, in a real sense, movies about Heavy Metal. *Repo Man*, by Alex Cox, is double-edged California punk.

Abel Ferrara's *King of New York* and Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* both embody the energies and driving force of hip-hop. (Indeed, says Lee, for him the film and the musical genre were symbiotic: "Editing is rhythm anyway. Maybe we weren't making an actual hip-hop film, but I was always trying to get that rhythm, get good beats.") In the same way, no biopic of Bruce Springsteen could better capture his essence than John Sayles' *Baby It's You*. And Bruce Beresford's *Tender Mercies*, thanks to its Horton Foote script and the acting of Robert Duvall, yields a never-matched portrait of country and western.

But these films work according to movie, not music, priorities: truth to individual voices balanced against what works on screen. In the rock biopic proper – *The Doors*, *Elvis*, *Birth of the Beatles*, *The Buddy Holly Story*, *Your Cheatin' Heart*, *La Bamba*, *John and Yoko: A Love Story*, *Sweet Dreams*, *Coal Miner's Daughter*, *Great Balls of Fire!* – the central priorities change and the paramount aim is

recognition. This means two things. One, the viewer faces a known narrative (which follows, according to its star's curriculum vitae, some mixture of three formats: the struggle, the price exacted and/or the tragic fate). The other expectation, far more problematic, is of some re-creation of live performance.

Inevitably this yields either a passable copy or something fairly risible. Critic John Lahr has just completed a screenplay about the life of the Who drummer Keith Moon. He says the problem of performance, of magic already seen, made the task more difficult than that of his many biographies (*Notes on a Cowardly Lion*, *Prick Up Your Ears*, *Dame Edna Everage*). "I can't think of a single film which captures the actual physical charisma of fronting a stage. Plus, television has burnt us out on the whole 'rock landscape'. We already know it all: the dressing room, the groupies, the coming offstage exhausted. A writer is stuck with the familiar – yet he wants to avoid sameness."

Rock biopics are rarely commissioned in the knowledge that these problems are easily solved. Usually, their genesis is purely and simply financial. Says Lahr, "People assume – wrongly – 'Hey, we've got this music; we already know it's popular. All we need is a way to get it up there and we're gonna make money'."

As effective soundtracks demonstrate, music and movies share a deep mutual attraction. But ironically this too makes framing biopics harder. A piece of film like that of Denis Lavant dancing down the street in Leos Carax's *Mauvais sang* offers something very close to live rock's exhilaration. Re-staged concert scenes – even with good actors or actual stars (such as Val Kilmer or Barbra Streisand) – don't.

In a genre famous for bungles and mediocrities, Brian Gibson's biopic of Tina Turner, *What's Love Got to Do With It*, works on every level. This is partly because it has advantages which counter-balance the problems. Tina Turner's life has coincided with watershed changes: in politics, in race relations, in fashion and the leisure industries. Though the film does not belabour these points, all are invoked – through 'home movies', modes of performance, styles of stage lighting, varied street scenes and eye-popping costumes. (The

passage of 30 years means, for Angela Bassett's Tina, 90 pieces of 'wardrobe').

Also, in black American autobiography, 'I' is code for 'we'. ("From Frederick Douglass to Arthur Ashe," says black author Randall Kenan, "the record of plight and travail and triumph speaks to 'our' lives as a group, as Everyman and Everywoman, singing an infinity of riffs on the sorrow and the Gospel.") Through this alone, the film carries an extra layer of resonance. Ike, we realise, is not just any restless and volatile musician. He is a black man whose paranoia is specifically of its time. With Laurence Fishburne and Bassett aided by sterling work from the rest of the cast, *What's Love* belongs to Ike as much as it does to Tina.

When he is 'discarded' at the movie's end, we see a way of life – both good and bad – being vanquished. The R'n'B performance circuit demanded specific talents: to make it you needed confidence, style, a wide array of hustling skills, supernatural stamina and plenty of one-on-one charm. That power structure was cannibalised in the disco era, which altered radio formats forever, handed control to 'name' producers and finally took apart the pieces which made up the R'n'B universe.

When that world vanished, so did a marketplace and an aesthetic which were exclusively black. As we see in *What's Love*, the universe a 'free' Tina chooses is neither 'black' nor 'white', but one within which her blackness is exotic and other. Mostly it is a corporate world, one which sees song and performance as money-making machinery. As Ike slinks away down the alley of oblivion, Tina begins a collusion with rock as spectacle rather than as 'soul'. Her future is MTV, rock as film trailer, rock as electronic press kits and global satellite link-up.

Therefore change rather than success or charisma centres this biopic. (The fact that both Ike and Tina have talent is simply a given.) *What's Love* is about the way a couple's aims and pasts first unite, then later destroy them. It deals with how the male ego handles envy and anxiety. It even broaches the roles played by terror and healing in making art. All the questions raised by this movie are real, adult questions: *What is* ►

THE RIDDLE OF THE ROCK BIOPIC



Song lines: Angela Bassett as Tina Turner in 'What's Love Got to Do With It', a rock biopic that charts sea changes in music, fashion and politics

◀ loyalty? What is respect? What is family supposed to mean – and whose responsibility is that?

What's Love achieves this because of a rare chemistry – an instance where all film's variables cohere. What initiates the confluence is Laurence Fishburne, who was won on to the project by the casting of Angela Bassett. Ever since they met at an audition over five years ago, Bassett and Fishburne have been major fans of each other's acting. Her *Boyz n the Hood* cameo kicked off a working relationship each wanted to pursue. But in the first script, as Bassett confided to writer David DiNicolo, Ike appeared as "a devil... an evil black male stereotype". Far from pleased, Fishburne demanded changes and engineered shifts, bringing the character dignity.

Director Abel Ferrara was not in the least surprised; he knows Fishburne's insight from directing him in *King of New York*. "Larry doesn't just change a role," he says, "he changes the movie. He affects every scene, even scenes he doesn't appear in." (Fishburne met Ferrara to read for a minor part in *King*, but left the audition as one of the two stars. He had changed the director's mind about a major character: his race, his viewpoint and his importance.)

In *What's Love*, Fishburne plays Ike as feral and ruthless. Yet it was the death of Ike's father, we learn, which taught him to bury any twinges of vulnerability. Tina, deserted early on by her mother, thinks she "understands" this. But her Faustian bargain is not struck with Ike alone. It is with all the things to which he offers access – all the delusions and promises popular music promotes. This is electrically captured in a fast-paced montage of singing and shopping where Tina, as the centrepiece, belts out huge desires ("I want to be crazy/I want to do some things!... Oh Lord, I want to be/Made over!"). There is no better filmed scene of summoning up the devils in rock.

Not every star's life, of course, offers such rich material. As punk's most famous victim, Gary Oldman transformed Alex Cox's slight *Sid and Nancy* into a gem. But, says the actor, he had everything and nothing to work with. "Everyone knew what Sid looked like, everyone had heard him speak. Except for me, of course, 'cause I had no interest in punk."

Oldman did plenty of research on Sid Vicious. He studied the footage, looked at the pictures, read stacks of cuttings. He sat at home in his bedroom, struggling with a bass guitar. "But we were not making *Sid and Nancy: What They Were Like*. These were banal, monosyllabic people! How they 'really were' would have been disastrous. What I saw was two people destroying their lives with drugs. How they dressed, what they chose to call themselves, I didn't care."

As with Fishburne in *What's Love*, Oldman's needs as an actor re-ordered the film. The Cox concept of punk remained, but the script – and its ending – altered. The final 60 minutes of *Sid and Nancy* are largely the work of Oldman and Chloë Webb (who plays Nancy Spungen). Both are proud that they spared viewers the pair's mythical 'suicide pact'. Oldman: "We'd already spent 80 minutes saying we'd kill ourselves. If we then actually did it, it would have been an anticlimax. Plus, both Chloë and I felt it happened the way we showed it."

Rock biopics claim to offer fans at least the

outline of truth. But that outline, like those nuggets of fact around which it is assembled, must be fully subservient to a movie's needs and pace. Says Oldman, "There's a certain theatricality to all scripts. Something which is, of necessity, going to be bigger than life. You work from a standpoint of reality, that's where actors come from. But you can be 'accurate' only in so far as it works on film."

As Tina Turner, Angela Bassett faced these pressures. Plus she had the real Tina Turner looking over her shoulder. Press hymns to Bassett's performance say she "crossed from stage to screen" via John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood* and Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*. But much earlier she was employed by John Sayles in *City of Hope*. (She also appears in the writer-director's current *Passion Fish*.) Sayles re-met Bassett when he acted in *Malcolm X*, and says he found her "pretty tense" about preparing to play Tina.

"It was funny," he says now, "because during my film [*Passion Fish*] the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill hearings were being televised. Every day that was a very major, ongoing topic. But for anyone who was black, it went a whole lot deeper. It was, 'Oh my God, Oh my God, this is awful for us.'" Adds Sayles, "I thought about that during my day shooting on *Malcolm*. About how, when Robert Dole starts laying into Clinton, we don't start running around, going 'This is awful for white people!' Right there is some of what Angela found herself up against. Tina Turner's story is just so big, so racially loaded."

Behind the things a person becomes, as Sayles counselled Bassett, lie a lot of other things he or she gives up or loses. "Alfre Woodard [the co-star of *Passion Fish*], talks about that in terms of 'assimilation'. But it goes beyond race. What does a country girl leave behind when she goes to the city? What are you giving up to have a relationship with somebody else? What does it mean when you become a wife and then a mother? Or: do you see yourself first and foremost as a star? Understanding anyone's viewpoint means grasping their priorities."

When a rock biopic works, it brings us more than a pale imitation of onstage spectacle; it gives us a sense of how priorities shaped the star we 'know'. Christopher Munch's brief *The Hours and Times* is an emotional snapshot, a negative from which the life of John Lennon might have developed. Its picture could, of course, be false – and yet it feels true. Munch's Lennon would be unrecognisable to Dick Clark, who produced his own film *Birth of the Beatles*. Yet Clark was there; he knew the real people and lived the life.

Munch made a small masterpiece; Clark's film is bogus schlock. Why is this? Because the rock biopic comes alive when, through some story, some charge of personality, it connects with the real allure and power of the music. Allure and power fuelled by the one assertion which defines rock: that its magic belongs to everyone, ticket-holders as well as stars. Iggy Pop once expressed this view nicely in a lyric, a bit of verse that Ike Turner would certainly understand: "And everything was made for you and me!/All of it was made for you and me.../So let's take a ride, and see what's mine!"

'What's Love Got to Do With It' opened on

17 September and is reviewed on page 55 of this issue

LISTEN TO BRITAIN

British pop gives pleasure.

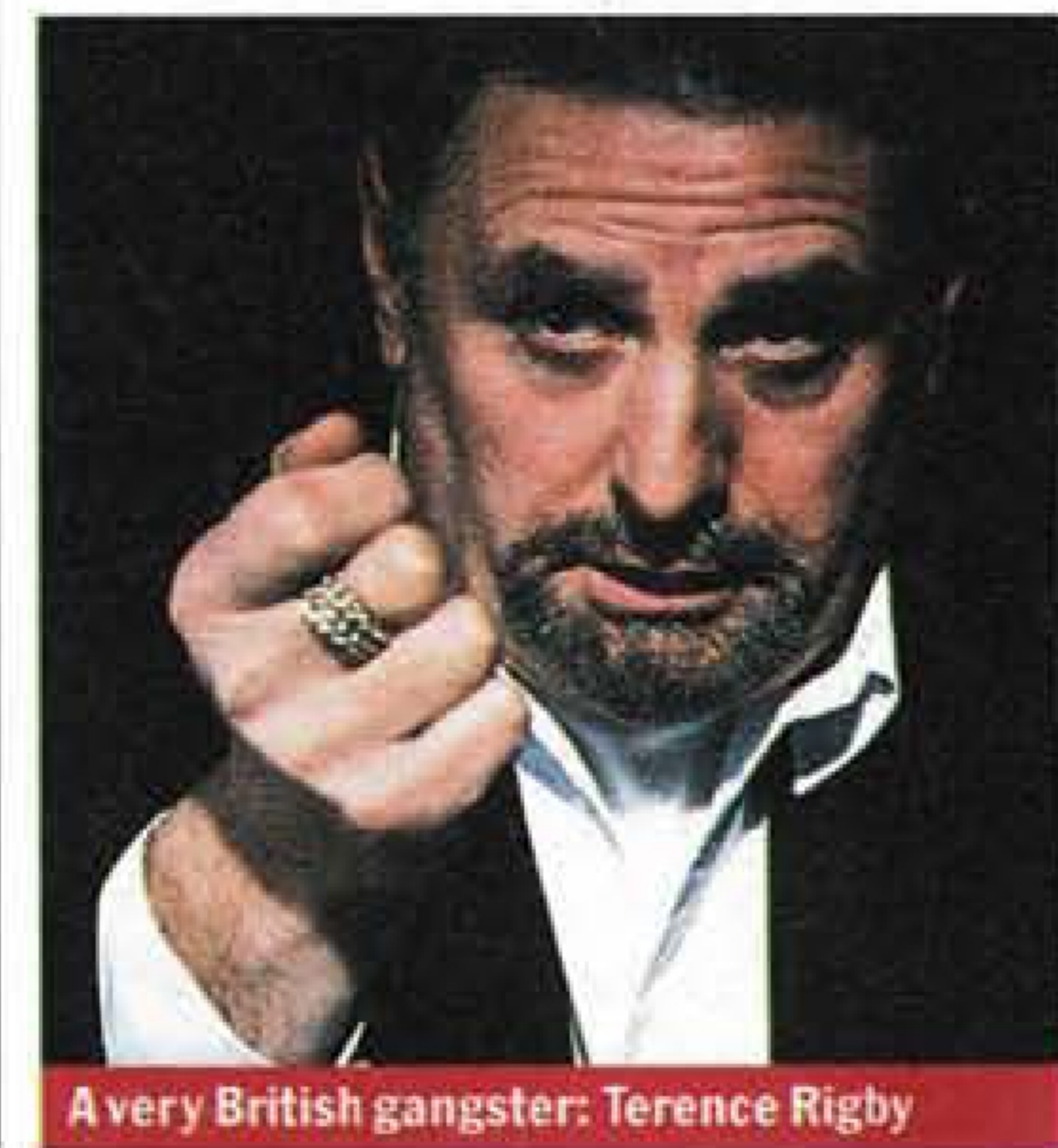
British cinema doesn't.

How reliable are these truisms? By Ben Thompson

Twenty-six-year-old Londoner Danny Cannon, director of *The Young Americans*, is to be commended for making a British film that large numbers of people will genuinely want to go and see, not just think they ought to. Yet movie nationalists should pause before they haul out the flags. This film – a slick gangster thriller set in Soho clubland – might be British, but it sure looks American. Cannon has skilfully fashioned his London locations into a postcard to Hollywood. The lighting is pure MTV – all deep ochres, steel greys and blues – and the characters only seem to leave their homes at either sunrise or sunset. The narrative moves along via the staple set pieces of major US studios (an Irish wedding, a gangster funeral, a sports fixture). Even the criminal threat is American: hip-hop hoodlums whose brazen disregard for life shocks our homely policemen.

On reflection, the mid-Atlantic feel of the proceedings might not be inappropriate. The tradition of Soho low life in which the film wants to root itself has always been strongly influenced by an Americanised ideal of glamour. Even the very British gangster (Terence Rigby) would have got his first self-image from classic Warners' gangster films. "We always catch up with you Yanks eventually," is how he puts it. The edge of subservience in *The Young Americans'* title – as if to survive in the cinema marketplace, UK youth culture has to borrow the visual glamour of US urban savagery – is sharpened by its origins. It started out as a David Bowie song, from the time when the cheeky South Londoner was appropriating black American funk style and selling it back to the rock mainstream with an audacity and independence of mind no white American could have managed.

The Young Americans lends support to one of the given truths of trans-Atlantic cultural exchange, namely that while the British pop music experience is distinct and in all respects equal to the American one, the British cinema experience somehow isn't. There is a wide consensus that the sounds of British



A very British gangster: Terence Rigby

pop music have been able to conjure up a shared world – a community – in a way that the visions of British cinema have not. But is this really the case?

One intriguing possibility with regard to the idea that British pop music provides a shared language in a way that homegrown film does not is that it might be wrong. After all, it was the American Quentin Tarantino, who recently drew attention to a British gangster tradition – *Get Carter*, *The Long Good Friday* and *The Hit* (and I would add the resonantly nasty *Villain*) – which could stand its ground against any American one. But what matters about the strong pop/weak film line is not so much whether or not it's true, as that a lot of people believe it. Even people who make films. Hanif Kureishi, interviewed in this magazine around the release of *London Kills Me*, said that "the fact that we held our own in terms of pop music" was "the only thing that prevented the country culturally from being taken over by America" in the 60s and 70s.

Pop snobbery

Perhaps this explains why so many recent British films have tried to use their pop soundtracks to create an ideal of community. This has not just been the case in productions with a yen for counter-cultural credibility – and sometimes the results have not been as expected. The bizarre up-frontness of the music in *Peter's Friends*, for example, was more than just another expression of Kenneth Branagh's devotion to the idea of a British *Big Chill* (William Hurt and Glenn Close had the Rolling Stones' 'You Can't Always Get What You Want'; Hugh Laurie and Imelda Staunton had the Pasadenas slaughtering Al Green's 'Let's Stay Together' – no wonder this country is in such a mess). The songs were an aural counterpoint to the montage sequences (the Falklands, the miners' strike, someone holding a mobile phone), and aimed to create the sense of a shared recent past. The soundtrack is so cravenly of its time that it reflects the failures and frustrations of the decade with uncomfortable accuracy. In the attempt to cement the consciousness of a generation around Tears For Fears' 'Everybody Wants to Rule the World', Branagh forged a satire of 80s mediocrity so subtle that he didn't even realise he was doing it.

There is snobbery in this judgment, but it is a snobbery with a proud heritage. A precise understanding of the niceties of pop-related style is a cornerstone of British cultural self-esteem. This is why it matters when the soundtrack to *The Young Americans* fails to make the right connections. For example, the music in the club scenes is not quite there: it strives for hipness and severity but falls fractionally short. At one point Viggo Mortensen's effectively nasty US gangster flips the stereo on in his flash car. He is listening to American rap, but the selection comes not from the



A postcard to Hollywood: UK youth culture gets a US gloss in 'The Young Americans'

vast slew of that music which is aimed specifically at the gangster classes. It is a song by a group called Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy, who are popular in progressive circles for their earnest left-liberal polemics. "These guys are funny," the villain observes, rather unconvincingly. Perhaps this is supposed to be a joke, but the straight-ahead tone of the rest of the film suggests otherwise. To anyone not fanatical about music, this will seem like nit-picking – and perhaps it is – but it is these fine distinctions that make us what we are.

Isaac Julien's *Young Soul Rebels* was almost too acutely aware of this. The film's vibrant funk beats punk soundtrack – Roy Ayers, Funkadelic and X-Ray Spex – was at the heart of its bold attempt to reconcile two kinds of otherness: the high-profile revolt of the white spiky-tops and the black soulboys' subterranean celebration of style and sensuality. The pirate radio scenes call to mind an earlier, more convincing film version of underground musical endeavour, Franco Rosso's underrated 1980 reggae sound-system drama *Babylon*. But beneath *Young Soul Rebels*' painful didacticism, music and fashion are always the passion; vital contributors to a real sense of time and place amid the Jubilee bunting and East London parks and garages.

The Jubilee is an obvious big pop-cultural moment, about which only a certain number of films can be made. This law of diminishing returns is not just a British problem – how many more soundtrack-led American films can there be about kids growing up when Kennedy was shot? But iconographic space, as opposed to time, is in shorter supply on this side

of the Atlantic. *The Young Americans* makes good use of Berwick and Wardour Streets, the homegrown drama on the British film industry's doorstep, but that instant low-life establishing shot of Raymond's Revue Bar has been almost worn out by television. Where next for enterprising young guns wishing to follow in Danny Cannon's footsteps?

Policeman's eye view

There are some places where a visual (rather than aural) language of youth community might be established, but not many of them. This is why the longer time goes on, the more Julien Temple's *Absolute Beginners*, with its squandering of the idea of Soho, seems not so much like the jolly folly it looked to be at the time, but a real betrayal. His profligacy with a vital national treasure – the first, and for many still the best literary expression of multi-racial youth culture in this country – was a mistake that subsequent British film-makers would have to struggle to come to terms with.

The idea that cultural resources might be finite and precious does not have to be a restricting one – it can be a liberation. If the makers of *Wild West*, for example, had not been so keen to discard the cultural baggage that came with their striking location in Southall's Asian community and skitter off in pursuit of a New Country novelty angle, they might have made a much more dramatic and engaging film. And it's not just a Little Englander's response to *The Young Americans* to think that it would be nice to see some true-Brit ecstasy gangsterism on the big screen – all bull-terriers and racing round the

M25. It is ironic that this film should be released at a time when what we in the old country like to refer to as 'rave culture' seems to be taking hold in the US. Our drug-related musical subcultures – like our athletes and our policemen, in the patriotic refrain – are the best in the world. This is why it's disappointing that the club culture in Cannon's film should be seen so much from the outside in; almost a policeman's eye view.

That is one accusation which cannot be levelled at Hanif Kureishi's *London Kills Me*, which for all its vampyric attitude to youth in general and Portobello Road drug culture in particular did manage to capture some of the excitement of being young in the city and making your own roots – the same excitement that MacInnes pinned down so well. This film was no "collection of pop videos stuck together," to quote the popular wisdom about *Absolute Beginners*. Its soundtrack, co-ordinated by DJ and 'Sound of the City' author Charlie Gillett, was audaciously pushed further into the background as the production went on.

There is no cinematic future for Britain in bumming resonance off classic pop, so perhaps it's a good sign that *The Young Americans*' soundtrack is not all it might be. The best moments of music in film – that great *Reservoir Dogs* walking shot, Harvey Keitel's iconic waking up to the Ronettes sequence in *Mean Streets*, the Kinks on the workplace radio in *Cathy Come Home* – come when the images give you enough insight into their subjects' lives to share the pleasure the music gives them.

The Young Americans opens on 8 October and is reviewed on page 57 of this issue

Immaculate bodies and invisible ones: Paul Julian Smith discusses Derek Jarman's film on Aids

BLUE AND THE OUTER LIMITS

● Cinema of Aids – cinema of love, cinema of limits. Derek Jarman's *Blue* is a rhapsodic hymn to love, dedicated to "all true lovers", an experience which most viewers will find both moving and disturbing. And it is also a work at the outer limits of cinematic expression: 100 minutes of luminous blue screen complemented by a meticulously crafted soundtrack featuring music recorded at Brian Eno's studio and lyrical and autobiographical text read by Nigel Terry and, at one unforgettable moment, by Jarman himself.

At first sight *Blue* would seem an idiosyncratic film, an extreme work of art prompted by a terrible affliction: Jarman's own confrontation with blindness in the course of his treatment for Aids. However, by fleeing what the film calls "the pandemonium of the image" *Blue* raises questions of visibility and invisibility, of sound and vision, which are central not only to Aids and homosexuality, but to cinema itself. How can film represent an invisible virus whose transmission cannot be seen and whose carriers have been subject to hostile surveillance and revelation? What is at stake for lesbians and gay men, for whom emergence into visibility (in life as in cinema) is a decidedly mixed blessing? How is film to cope with the competing demands of word and image in an age when Hollywood is increasingly given up to a cinema of pure spectacle in which the complex pleasures of the voice are lost?

Vital here is the question of nationality. At once the most English and the most European of British film-makers, Jarman since his first features *Sebastiane* (1976) and *Jubilee* (1978) has addressed himself alternately to the decadent state of the UK and to the promise of a mythic Mediterranean, all light and sensuality. This double focus recurs in *Blue*, where the horrifying and sometimes grimly humorous account of Jarman's treatment in London hospitals is juxtaposed with rapturous fantasies of blue boys on sunlit beaches, of 'ultramarine' strangers bearing exotic gifts.

Here Jarman's approach coincides in a most unlikely way with that of two French writers and film-makers who have also explored the relationship between word and image: Cyril Collard, whose film version of his novel *Savage Nights* has achieved unprecedented commercial success in France and abroad; and Hervé Guibert, whose autobiographical novels *To the Friend Who Did Not Save My Life* and *Compassion Protocol*

document his life with Aids and his attempt to represent that life in still photography and in video.

Gay activist and scholar Simon Watney has recently attacked Collard's film in *Sight and Sound*, relating the high rate of HIV infection in France not only to criminal government indifference but also to the inability of gay men to organise politically around health issues and to the lack of a sense of gay identity or community among French 'homosexuals', who regard themselves, quite simply, as men who have sex with men. Guibert would also seem to be a prime target for such accusations: flitting from restaurant to restaurant, flirting with Parisian celebrities – for example Michel Foucault and Isabelle Adjani – who appear thinly veiled in his book, his response to the increasing horrors of disease is (like Collard's) not to join the Aids activists whose 'antics' he ridicules, but to flee to the beach: to confront the ocean and its promise of the infinite.

Blank and blue

While the Anglo-American approach to Aids has been largely political (protesting against the injustice and ignorance of government policies), the French and southern European response has often been metaphysical (seeking release from pain in transcendence, in a universal love without limits). *Savage Nights* ends with Collard facing the sea and discovering that he is "in life", as the camera wheels away from him over the water; *Compassion Protocol* repeatedly describes a rhapsodic scene of a young Arab athlete "boxing against the sea", fighting the impossible fight for life against death. (Guibert also filmed himself boxing phantom opponents, one of the exercises prescribed to preserve his emaciated body.) Facing the ocean, confronting the infinite, the 'apolitical' French coincide with the much more overtly political Jarman in a common quest to salvage the meaning in life in the limit situation of Aids. *Blue* thus raises the unique possibility of a common interest in British and French cinemas of Aids. And it also allows us to reappraise Anglo-American hostility to transcendence and refusal to contemplate the metaphysical needs felt by many people at the limits of human endurance.

On the beach, with Collard and Guibert, Jarman gives himself up to abstraction, in all senses. "Blue", the film tells us, "transcends

the solid geometry of human limits." As Jarman writes of monochrome painter Yves Klein (an acknowledged precedent for the film) "monochrome [produces] liberation from personality." Elsewhere, however, Jarman is uncompromisingly personal about the physicality of Aids. A lengthy account of the multiple and grotesque side effects of his medication (which include both high and low blood pressure) is read against the sickly sound of a car engine refusing to start up; one meaning of "blue" is the searing after-image left on the retina by the doctor's diagnostic camera flash.

Guibert, too, is relentless in his chronicle of the bodily experience of Aids, detailing the lengthy manoeuvres required simply to get out of bed; describing the invasive testing he compares to "rape" and the daily ordeal by mirror in which he is transformed into "an Auschwitz inmate", but one without the slightest chance of survival. His French publishers, however, chose to put on the covers of Guibert's novels glamorous self-portraits taken before the transformation so meticulously documented in the books themselves. In *Savage Nights*, Collard also chose to play down the physical effects of Aids and repeatedly reveals his unblemished body to the camera.

If the immaculate bodies of Guibert and Collard are a kind of narcissistic disavowal, denying to both author and audience the physicality of disease, it is by no means clear that filmic images of a ravaged body are preferable. Aids activist and academic Douglas Crimp has attacked some photographic portraits of people with Aids, noting how they strip their subjects of dignity and take pleasure in bringing to light visible evidence of the invisible virus in, say, the lesions of Kaposi's sarcoma.

Demonstrating against just such an exhibition at the New York Museum of Modern Art, ACT UP demanded "Stop looking at us: start listening to us." Though activists also argued for "the visibility of PWAs who are vibrant, angry, loving, sexy, beautiful" (criteria to which the charismatic Collard and Guibert certainly conform), they reveal a healthy suspicion of what Foucault called "the trap of visibility", of the way vulnerable groups branded as sick, perverse or criminal may be caught in the light and subjected to dehumanising inspection.

By refusing to image the body, by offering only the blue screen on which spectators project their own image, Jarman brilliantly eludes

the double bind of representing Aids – bearing witness to illness, but avoiding both the narcissism of Collard and Guibert and the invasive intrusions of the documentary gaze. We learn to stop looking and to start listening instead.

But what of homosexuality? *Blue* suggests that, as with Aids, there is a special relationship between lesbians and gays and visibility. The first words spoken in *Blue* are: “You say to the boy: ‘Open your eyes.’” But if homosexuality denotes a special kind of vision which takes place when people of the same sex truly open their eyes to each other (and to themselves), then it is also a relation to the gaze of others, which is more problematic. As *Blue* asks: “How are we to be perceived? For the most part we are invisible.”

This invisibility of gay men, this refusal of straight institutions to see, has made us in Europe and the US the main casualties of an epidemic which, as Simon Watney reminds us, has been allowed to happen. But Jarman can at least speak with authority of a “we”, of a community whose history he is proud to assume: from the disco years of the 70s onwards. The French, notoriously, know no we, no community. While British critics unanimously called the protagonist of *Savage Nights* a “bisexual”, Collard (or rather his alter ego, Jean) uses no such word, stating only that he “likes boys as well [as women]”. In spite of his intermittent sexual activity in the novels, Guibert also shows no awareness of community with other men who have sex with men. Homosexuality is thus an activity, not an identity. It is something you do, not something you are. But here once again the abstraction of *Blue* coincides with the blurred and multiple sexualities of the French. The queerest sequence is not the moving personal testimonies of a single voice, but a stylised chant of multiple distorted voices: “I am a mannish, muff-diving, size queen... a cock-sucking, straight-acting, lesbian man.” Released from the image which is, *Blue* tells us, “the prison of the soul”, new and disturbing identities proliferate and are projected on to the blank, blue screen.

No boundaries

What is cinema? For film theorist André Bazin, it is primarily ontology: the unmediated trace of real objects on the screen. But for Bazin cinema is also language. Refusing the tyranny of the image, Jarman also rejects cinematic lan-

guage: the grammar of cinematography and editing on which film spectators are so dependent. We are thus thrown back on the cinematic apparatus itself, on the projection of light on to a screen and our own physical presence before it. Like Klein’s paintings, *Blue* reveals that monochrome is never simple or single: the colour seems to pulse before our eyes and is constantly inflected by the tiny imperfections of the medium. Moreover, Jarman’s *tabula rasa* shows how in all cinema vision is distorted by sound: we read the blue screen according to prompts from the soundtrack as now the storm of the epidemic; now heaven “seen without looking out of the window”; now the “fathomless blue of bliss”.

Collard and Guibert also place the cinematic apparatus at the centre of their autobiographical narratives. Thus in *Savage Nights* Collard plays a cameraman and we are repeatedly shown images shot through the cross hairs of his camera. And if his film is, as many critics have complained, both narcissistic and misogynist, it does at least make us think about the process of identification in film, of the ways we are encouraged to take up Collard’s character’s viewpoint. There is also a sexualised division of labour between sound and vision here: Jean’s heterosexual affair with the young Laura (Romane Bohringer) is strikingly verbal; indeed, much of it takes place through a telephone answering machine. His gay encounters, however, are wholly visual: silent caresses from seductively backlit strangers on the banks of the Seine. Guibert too uses cinema not as a vehicle of testimony or documentary but rather as an apparatus which plays an ambiguous role in the imaging of self which is his life story. When shooting his daily session with the masseur or his repeated and traumatic medical inspections, he is fully aware of the intrusion of the camera and the limits of the frame.

Savage Nights is the only film Collard made before his death; *Compassion Protocol* ends with Guibert beginning what he calls his “first film”, the chronicle of a life with Aids which was shown on French television after his death (fragments were also broadcast in Britain on a recent *Late Show* special on Foucault). In their defiant singularity, Collard’s feature film and Guibert’s video thus stand like *Blue* as a testimony to the passion of cinema at the limit, to a confrontation with mortality which is not simply a meditation on love and life, but also

an intelligent and sometimes sceptical critique of the role of cinema, both in that love, and in that life.

In his book of the film *Last of England*, Jarman recounts how he would close his eyes when adding the last touch to a painting. *Blue* explores that same distance between sight and vision implied in this anecdote: the gap between the physical capacity to see, which is so little explored by those who take it for granted, and the artistic, even metaphysical, capacity for creation, which remains a mystery to artists themselves. By denying the cinema spectator sight (the image track which could become, as in Collard and Guibert, narcissistic or voyeuristic), Jarman rewards us with a privileged vision. But most importantly, by dwelling on the physicality of (unseen) disease, he refuses us the facile consolation of lending physical blindness a transcendent metaphorical value. Hence the resonant and disturbing phrase on the soundtrack: “For blue, there are no boundaries or solutions.” Freed from the trap of visibility, spectators can transcend with Jarman the limits of individual personality. But as *Blue*’s uncompromising narrative of the body reveals, that transcendence cannot resolve the historical and political problems raised so brutally by Aids. Jarman thus avoids the weary metaphor of illness as love for which *Savage Nights* has attacked. It is indeed too late for the old Romantic fantasies of love’s sweet sickness. To cite *Blue* once more, none of us can simply walk away from illness.

Guibert writes that one of the things lost to PWAs is “distance”: the time to allow oneself to mature as an artist, to experiment and to develop. Jarman’s extraordinary creativity in recent times, with five features in as many years, reveals a similar accelerated response to the prospect of mortality so movingly evoked by his film *Blue*.

But in its combination of word and image, of visibility and invisibility, *Blue* also makes a subtle commentary on the very complex implications of sight for Aids and for homosexuality. Switching between politics and metaphysics, *Blue* serves as a vital link between Anglo-American activism and French abstraction. With his cinema of love, his cinema of limits, Jarman’s triumph is to have projected this vision with uncompromising clarity and brilliance.

‘Blue’ was screened on Channel 4 on 19 September and is reviewed on page 40 of this issue

Film as music; painting and film; underground films. Experimental film-maker Stan Brakhage reflects on his history to Suranjan Ganguly

ALL THAT IS LIGHT BRAKHAGE AT 60

The ecstasy of the sublime:
Brakhage's hand-painted 1987
'The Dante Quartet'

● When he's not in class lecturing on Méliès and the Sienese Renaissance painters, or drinking Irish coffee at Pearl's in downtown Boulder, or armed with crayons doing a very complicated squiggle with his two small children, Stan Brakhage is hard at work in his attic, carefully adding another layer of blue with his fingers to a celluloid strip thickly coated with reds, greens and yellows. The new film doesn't have a name, nor is Brakhage sure he wants to give it one. All he wants to talk about is that deep blue and the stained glass windows which he has just seen at Chartres.

While most of his contemporaries with whom he forged the American avant-garde film movement have slowed down or stopped working, Brakhage, who turned 60 in January, is as prolific as ever, adding six to eight films a year to an *oeuvre* of nearly 250. Widely regarded as the world's foremost living experimental film-maker, he was recently honoured by the US Library of Congress, which selected his monumental four-part film *Dog Star Man* (1962-64) for inclusion in the National Film Registry. Earlier, Brakhage received the prestigious MacDowell Medal, whose previous recipients include Robert Frost, Georgia O'Keeffe and Aaron Copland.

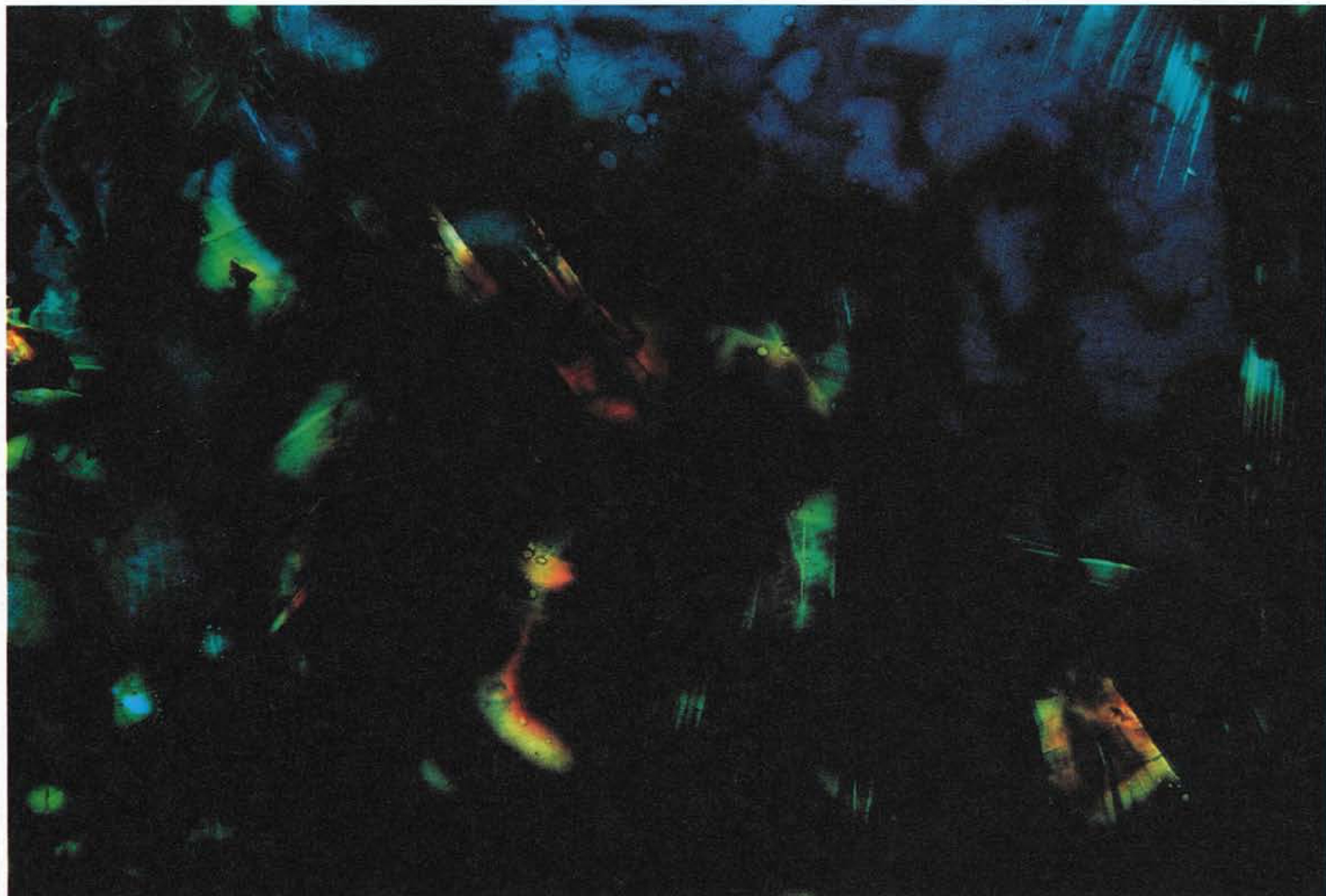
Born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1933, Brakhage made his first film, *Interim*, in 1952 when he was 19. Over the next few years he met the key figures of the American avant-garde who were to influence him: poets like Robert Duncan, Michael McClure, Louis Zukofsky and Kenneth Rexroth; film-makers like Maya Deren,

Jonas Mekas, Marie Menken, Kenneth Anger and Sidney Peterson; composers like John Cage and Edgar Varèse, with whom he studied. Shortly after his marriage to Jane Collum in 1958, Brakhage set up home in the Colorado mountains near Boulder, where for the next 30 years he would live and make his films. From 1969 to 1981 he taught film history and aesthetics at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and from 1981 he has been teaching film at the University of Boulder. Divorced from Jane in 1986, Brakhage now lives in Boulder with his second wife, Marilyn, and their two children.

Described variously as a romantic, a visionary and a humanist, Brakhage has produced an astonishing range of work that includes psychodramas, autobiographical films, birth films, Freudian trance films, cosmological epics like *Dog Star Man*, 'song' cycles inspired by lyric poetry, unphotographed films like *Mothlight* (1963), and Abstract Expressionist hand-painted films like *The Dante Quartet* (1987). In his book *Metaphors on Vision* (1963), he has defined his work in terms of "birth, sex, death, and the search for God", but the ostensible subject of all his films is the act of seeing and its relationship to the world and to film, which becomes a corollary of that act.

Suranjan Ganguly: You've been involved with film for over 40 years – as a maker, thinker, writer and academic. Has your sense of film as film changed?

Stan Brakhage: In one sense it hasn't changed: from the beginning I had a feeling for film as vision. I didn't think it was related to literature



or theatre at all, nor had it anything to do with Renaissance perspective. I was struggling all the time against the flypaper of other arts harnessing film to their own usages, which means essentially as a recording device or within the long historical trap of 'picture' – by which I mean a collection of nameable shapes within a frame. I don't even think still photography, with few exceptions, has made any significant attempt to free itself from that. So I had certain instinctual feelings about film even before I made one.

What do you mean by "vision", and how is it related to film?

For me vision is what you see, to the least extent related to picture. It is just seeing – it is a very simple word – and to be a visionary is to be a seer. The problem is that most people can't see. Children can – they have a much wider range of visual awareness – because their eyes haven't been tutored to death by man-made laws of perspective or compositional logic. Every semester I start out by telling my students that they have to see in order to experience film and that seeing is not just looking at pictures. This simple idea seems to be the hardest to get through to people.

But is it really so simple? In your films, to see without picturing is a composite of many visual processes, only one of which is open-eye vision, or what we call normal everyday vision.

Open-eye vision is what we are directly conscious of, but there's much more going on that we ignore. Seeing includes open-eye, peripheral and hypnagogic vision, along with moving visual thinking, dream vision and memory feedback – in short, whatever affects the eyes, the brain and the nervous system. I believe that all these have a right to be called seeing since they enable us to inherit the full spectrum of our optic and nervous systems.

Can you define them?

Hypnagogic vision is what you see with your eyes closed – at first a field of grainy, shifting, multi-coloured sands that gradually assume various shapes. It's optic feedback: the nervous system projects what you have previously experienced – your visual memories – into the optic nerve endings. It's also called closed-eye vision. Moving visual thinking, on the other hand, occurs deeper in the synapsing of the brain. It's a streaming of shapes that are not nameable – a vast visual 'song' of the cells expressing their internal life. Peripheral vision is what you don't pay close attention to during the day and which surfaces at night in your dreams. And memory feedback consists of the editings of your remembrance. It's like a highly edited movie made from the real.

How is film predisposed to embody these?

Over the years I have come to believe that every machine people invent is nothing more than an extension of their innards. The base rhythm of film – 24 frames per second – is sort of centred in its pulse to our brain waves. If you start a film at eight frames per second and with a variable speed motor slowly raise it to 32, you put the audience in the first stage of hypnosis. So the natural pulse of film is a corollary to the brain's reception of everyday ordinary vision. Then film grain approximates the first stage of

hypnagogic vision, which occurs at a pulse within the range of film's possibilities of projection. Also, during editing, film comes close to the way you remember. And finally, if you cut fast enough, you can reflect within 24 frames per second the saccadic movements of the eyes, which people aren't ordinarily aware of but which are an intrinsic part of seeing.

So virtually all your experiments were aimed at developing this relationship between film and seeing?

My cutting has always tried to be true to the eyes, to the nervous system and to memory, and to capture these processes, which happen very rapidly. At one point I felt my montage – inspired by Griffith and Eisenstein – had to evolve to do justice to memory recall, so I began to use the single frame to suggest what the mind can do during a flashback. Then I began to use superimpositions because these occur constantly in the saccadic movements of the eyes and in memory feedback and input. I've done as many as seven superimpositions at one time – in *Christ Mass Sex Dance* (1990) – and I wish I could do more because there are more in vision itself. Then I shot out of focus to capture peripheral vision, which is always unfocused, or used flares to give a sense of the body when it has an overload in feedback and literally flares – something you can see with your eyes open. In *Loving* (1957) a couple make love in the sun, and their optic system flares – it's really the nervous system's ecstasy – in oranges and yellows and whites. I had noticed that when film flares out at the end of a colour roll you get those same colours, and I put them in because they are intrinsic to human vision as well.

But of all these possible seeings, the hypnagogic has been the most important to you.

Yes. I sometimes like just to sit and watch my closed eyes sparking, or the streamings of my mind. They're the best movies in town! But the flow is so rapid that to document it would call for a camera that would run 1,000 frames per second. All I can do on film is to grasp a little piece of it and then make a corollary. So my films don't reflect what I see when I close my eyes – only a symbol of that. The extent to which I accept that is the extent to which I can be true to what film can do.

Since closed-eye vision is largely unfilmable, then, you had to find other means of representing it, and painting directly on to film became one way to do this.

At the birth of my first child I was acutely conscious of my hypnagogic vision whenever I blinked my eyes. But it didn't appear in the film I made of that birth – *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959) – so for the birth of my second child, which occurs in Part 2 of *Dog Star Man*, and of my third in *Thigh Line Lyre Triangular* (1961) I painted on film to include what I had seen. I became very excited when I realised that my closed-eye vision resembled the work of the Abstract Expressionist painters I admired so much – all very Pollock-like and Rothko-like. *Did you sense that they were also doing the same thing – recording their optic feedback?*

When I was living in New York in the 50s and 60s I became an avid gallery-goer. I discovered Turner, who is probably still the most pervasive influence on me because of his representations of light. I was also strongly drawn to the

Abstract Expressionists – Pollock, Rothko, Kline – because of their interior vision. None of these so-called abstract painters – going back to Kandinsky and earlier – had made any reference to painting consciously out of their closed-eye vision, but I became certain that unconsciously many of them had. To me, they were all engaged in making icons of inner picturisation, literally mapping modes of non-verbal, non-symbolic, non-numerical thought. So I got interested in consciously and unconsciously attempting to represent this.

But it wasn't enough to paint. To find as close a corollary to hypnagogic vision as possible, you had physically to manipulate the surface of the film strip.

I tried a number of different things, including iron filings under magnets! I would bake film before and after photographing to bring out certain chemical changes in the grain so that it would correspond to certain stages of hypnagogic vision. I once even herded brine shrimp into a pack to capture the quality of their movements. And I worked with household chemicals and dyes, and placed coloured powders under vibrators and magnets. The making of *The Text of Light* (1974), which involved shooting through a glass ashtray, was another way of capturing certain forms of both closed- and open-eye envisionment of light.

And you would scratch on film and write on it.

Words appear on film throughout my work. By scratching them I try to be true to the way words vibrate and jiggle when they appear in closed-eye vision – which doesn't happen very often. Also, by scratching them I can at least make them more intrinsic to what film is – they become carriers of light. Photographed words relate more to memory recall or just to the open-eyed present.

Hand-painted sections appear in your work as early as 'Prelude' (1962), the first part of 'Dog Star Man', but in the last few years you've been making films like 'The Dante Quartet' and 'Delicacies of Molten Horror Synapse' (1991) that are wholly hand painted. You even claim this is all you want to do now.

I now believe that film is much more predisposed to what you can do with paint and scratches than with anything else. My hand-painted films are my favourites – I look at them again and again and they always feel like film, not as if they're referring to something else. *Do you see your work within a specific tradition of hand-painted film?*

I've always felt drawn to the hand-painted films of Méliès, which are an extraordinary phenomenon in their own right, and I've felt a kinship with film-makers such as Viking Eggeling, Walter Ruttmann, Oscar Fischinger and Len Lye, who even batiked on film with his fingers. One of my main inspirations has been Marie Menken, and Harry Smith is often in my mind as I work. Many of them didn't paint on film, but their work has a hands-on quality that I admire.

What do you mostly work with?

Acrylics – mostly translucent acrylics – and India inks and a variety of dyes that are variously mixed with or not with acrylics. I have also made whole films with Magic Markers. I use brushes at times, but basically it's paint on fingers, a different colour on each finger. Usually I prepare the film first with chemicals, ►

◀ so that the paint can dry and form patterns, then during the drying I use chemicals again to create organic shapes and forms. Finally I go over it a frame at a time to stitch these patterns into a unified whole. If you watch me do it, it looks as though I'm playing the piano – it's very quick, very deft – but people forget that I have to paint 24 frames to get a second's worth of film. I have hand-painted films like *Eye Myth* (1972), which is nine seconds long, as well as *Interpolations* (1992) which runs for 12 minutes – the longest hand-painted film I have ever made. You've painted on all kinds of film stock, including 65mm ImaX film. You also paint directly on footage you've found or shot yourself. What part of vision does that approximate?

Let me say first that painting on ImaX was very exciting – it was as if an easel painter had been given a wall, it was such a large space to work with. The model for painting on photographed film was closed-eye vision mixing with open-eye vision. Not very many people can see that, and it took me a long time before I could do both – see what I was looking at and also watch the nervous system's immediate shape-and-colour reaction to it.

Are the recent hand-painted films a new involvement with the hypnagogic, or the beginning of a completely new phase in your work?

No, that's over. I don't want to make corollaries of my closed-eye vision any more – not consciously – because it limits me in what I can be conscious of. I feel my consciousness is no longer a very good arbiter, that it could even be a limitation on my making, which is another was of saying I'm now more nearly at one with the painting I do on film.

So what is the new hand-painted work going to be? What's new is that I don't have anything else as reference other than what the film itself is showing me. Every time film reflects something that's nameable, it limits what it can do. If I can make films that refer to things that can't be lived through, then I feel that I'm giving film a chance to be in the fullest possible sense, and that makes me feel good. Now I really just want to fool around with paint on film, hoping to do so in such an open way that whatever is deep inside me, past all prejudice and even all learning, can come out along my arms to my fingertips, and with the help of these smudges and dyes sing a song like birds on a normal day.

From 1979 to 1990 you worked on an extraordinary series of films – 'The Roman Numeral Series', 'The Arabic Numeral Series', 'The Egyptian Series' and 'The Babylon Series' – where there's already a sense of leaving behind the hypnagogic for the very electrical patterns of thought before it even becomes thought.

I've been going in and out of the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* for the last 15 years, and I've studied Hammurabi's code very closely. When I made those films I was trying to do two things: to get a sense of the moving visual thinking of those cultures, and to see how out of it rose the glyphs – hieroglyphs – that shape their language. I tried to represent pictorially what occurs during this 'seeing', and how within this flow of electrical colouration there are also bits of memory feedback that intermix with the hypnagogic and help shape the glyphs.

So essentially you were trying to tap into a pre-natal, pre-verbal and pre-picture consciousness – the very womb of the image?

Yes. We know that hieroglyphs are symbolic representations of the external world, but where do they come from? My sense is that they appear first as shapes in closed-eye vision. At the beginning of each film in *The Babylon Series*, I've scratched a particular Babylonian glyph, and then I go for the source of the thinking that produced it.

So the films arose from a study of these written characters combined with explorations of your own moving visual thinking as a model?

The first clear sense I had of these glyphs was when I was on a plane which was about to make a belly landing since its landing gear had malfunctioned. We were told to adopt the foetal position. It was then that I had a series of intense glyphs that was so powerful that even in that state I grabbed a pencil and piece of paper and drew them. Later I scratched them on to film and interspersed them with appropriate colour flares that had also occurred at that time in my hypnagogic vision. The film was *he was born, he suffered, he died* (1974). As a result, I discovered how the mind can spark glyphs that seemed not pictures of events from my life but compound symbols of those events. *The films are also meditations on light, which is not new to your work, except that this light is different, situated deep within the pre-conscious.*

What is film, after all, but rhythmized light? I've always agreed with that line in Pound's cantos: "All that is is light." That's us and everything we're seeing, the dance of the light from the inside mixing with that coming from the outside in.

How did you create the light patterns in these films? I didn't do any hand-painting or scratching, but photographed with various glasses, prisms, crystal balls, bits and pieces of tin foil and whatever else was handy. I manipulated these with my hands in front of the lens. If I was lucky, I would get an equivalent of the light streaming and would combine fragments of ordinary photographed material with this light to create a compound – little meaningful glyphs of a sort. I also used filters. In fact, often with at least two filters in my hands I would colour the streaks of light in various ways. And, of course, the prisms provided me with refraction colours, which I found intrinsic to moving visual thinking.

One can enjoy these films on another level, as analogues to music. You've even called them "visual music".

Of all the arts, music is closest to film, and I've had a long infatuation with music and film. I was very inspired by Charles Ives, who has several different sound sources going on simultaneously – a brass band on one side of the stage, a choir on the other and an orchestra in the middle – each playing their own music and it all interweaving. So I tried in combining sounds and visuals to push to the furthest possibility of a corollary between music and film, which is similar to Ives' combinations of different musical pieces, each retaining its own aesthetic integrity.

At the same time, you've always held that sound in

film is an aesthetic error. In fact, most of your films have been silent.

Film is obviously visual, and from an aesthetic standpoint. I see no need for a film to be accompanied by sound any more than I would expect a painting to be. At first I did make sound films, but I felt sound limited seeing, so I gave it up. My films were complex enough and difficult enough to see without any distraction of the ear thinking. But if I felt a film needed sound, I always included it. In the last few years I've even cut film to music – take *Passage Through: A Ritual* (1990) which I edited to a piece by Philip Corner – but that seems to be coming to an end. I believe now that you can only go so far with music, and then film is not music. It first became apparent to me 15 years ago when I tried to cut exactly to the measures and shifts of a Bach fugue and the result was a mess. Since film clearly isn't music, I am now trying to find out what it is that film can do that's purely film. I really wish to open myself to that difference. I want to make films that are not even corollaries of music, that wouldn't even make you think of music.

So a film that...

... will not be about anything at all. I wish I could be more precise, but it's hard to describe this in words. It was in a chapel – the Rothko Chapel in Houston – that I had a sense of nothing. What I felt looking at those paintings was completely distinct from a religious experience, something purely organic and sensual but that drew me out to the very limits of my inner being. That's where I think it all begins – in the sense of the ineffable – and I want that to come through me into my work. I want that appreciation of nothing being everything.

And anything that is referential deflects and limits that to some extent?

Yes. A work which is too referential to things outside the aesthetic ecology, too dependent on something extrinsic, is not art. All this slavish mirroring of the human condition feels like a bird singing in front of mirrors. The less a work of art reflects the world, the more it is being in the world and having its natural life like anything else. Film must be free from all imitations, of which the most dangerous is the imitation of life.

So when you speak of an "aesthetic ecology", you're speaking of the art work as a self-enclosed object?

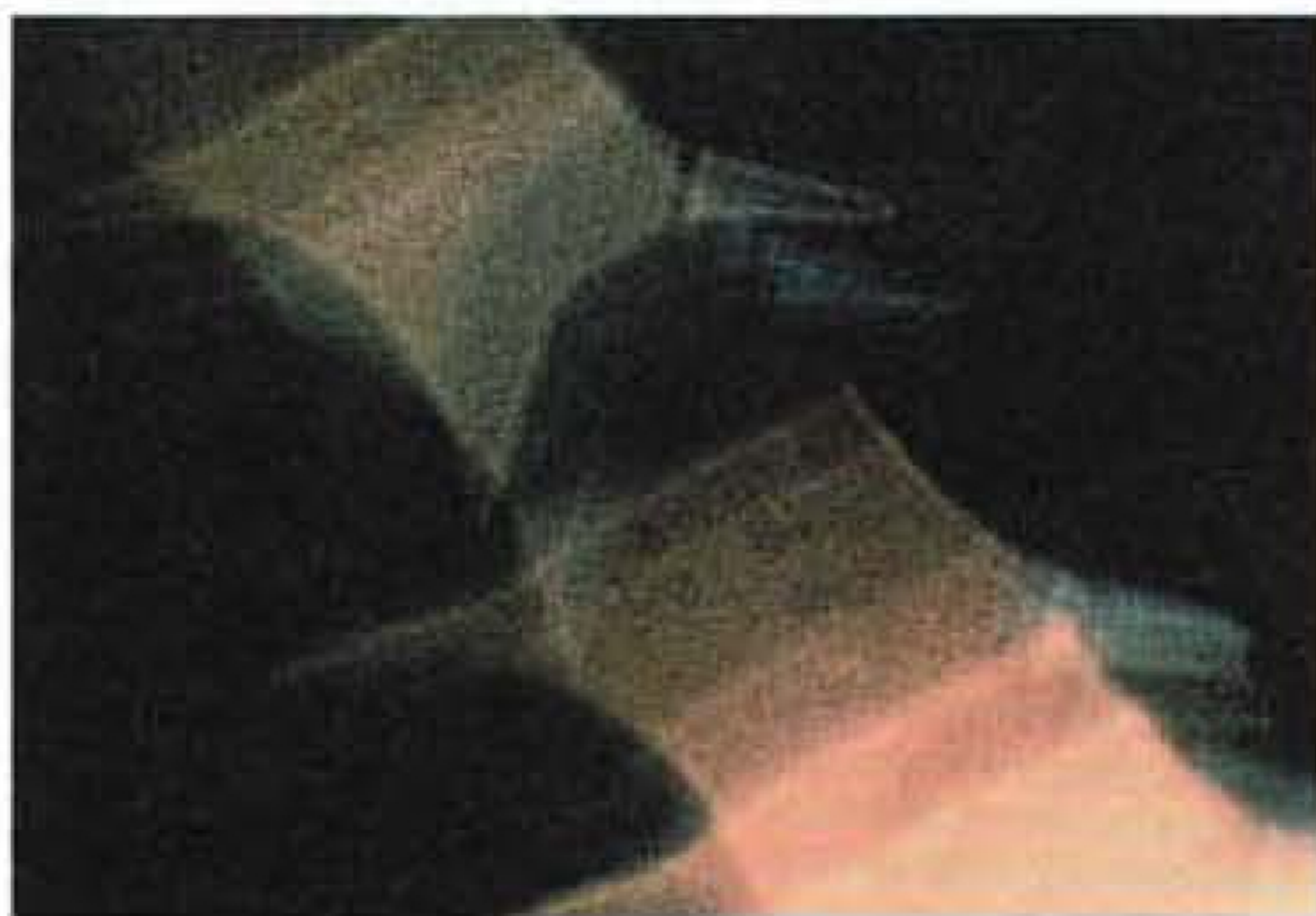
A work of art must be something with a world of its own in which everything that exists is interrelated so that it forms a whole, as do Rothko's paintings. And it must convey a sense of itself – for example, a film must show at all times some sense of it being an on-off projection of stills that flicker in the opening and closing of the shutter. The great films always do this – even narrative films have ways in which they do it. When I first scratched titles on film – in *Desistfilm* (1954) – I became conscious at once that they directed the eyes to what film is. Paint on film does that too with its irregularities and its rhythms.

But isn't that too restrictive a definition? One of the complaints made about your work is that it fails to address the socio-political realities of the culture within which it exists.

I think my films address that constantly. I don't



Alpha and omega: the cosmological epic 'Dog Star Man'



Thought before thought: 'Roman Numerals No. 3'



Beginnings: 'Thigh Line Lyre Triangular'

All this slavish mirroring of the human condition feels like a bird singing in front of mirrors. Film must be free from all imitations, of which the most dangerous is the imitation of life

think there has ever been a film that I wished to make that wasn't political in the broadest sense of the term, that wasn't about what I could feel or sense for better or worse from the conditionings of my times and from my rebellions against those conditionings. Take *Scenes from Under Childhood* (1967-70) which I made out of disgust at the Shirley Temple representation of childhood which was utterly false and served only to aid and abet the abuse of children. Or take the childbirth films. It was appalling to me that childbirth was a taboo subject, excluded from human vision, and that women were often barbarously treated in child-bearing and ignored as mothers within this culture. So there were political motivations that led me to make the five childbirth films. At the same time, I would add that if in these films I had tried in some conscious way to present a political alternative, I would have falsified the art process. As an artist, I have to be very careful not to allow social and political impulses to dominate because then I would falsify the balances that are intrinsic and necessary to make an aesthetic ecology.

The childbirth films are part of a long cycle you made about your first family. Although there is no implicit political subtext, these films resonate with the sense of a life lived in a specific place and time and according to a specific vision. In a way they are probably the most 'political' of all your films.

I thought that if I photographed my daily life and photographed it as inspired by home movies or the amateur film rather than from what I had learned from film theory and the work of film-makers such as Méliès, Griffith, Dreyer and Eisenstein, and if I could also take inspiration from errors which I read as significant Freudian slips in home movie-making, then I could avoid drama. But I didn't realise the extent to which people in their daily lives reflect the movies and what they read. We were plugged into the same literary/theatrical syndrome and our household to some extent was a template of what I wanted to avoid.

How did you include Freudian slips in your films?

I would study the raw footage so closely that it went beyond the average dream analysis in therapy. And I would find things in it that seemed very embarrassing, that I wanted to throw out, but by the time I was through, they would become the centre of the film. Also, while shooting I would sometimes consciously try to catch what seemed like a true slip – and then in the editing put it in a context where it would reveal itself fully.

In almost all these films there is a celebration of the trivia of daily life, a sense that the commonplace is itself sacred.

For me, that's where we really live, that's what we really have. To stop the overwhelming influence of drama in film, I began to concentrate on the glories of an undramatic present, which is literally the tabletop. That is what peripheral vision is most involved with – the so-called mundane, which people use as a word of contempt when they really mean 'earth'. What they don't see is the potential for glory, for envisionment that's inherent in even doing the dishes, in the soap suds with their multiple rainbows, or in the dull edge of a plate that has

to be scrubbed. If they could only see, only get involved with the wonders right under their noses – more specifically, if they could only see the movie playing on either side of their noses. All they have to do is close their eyes and look. *Was there that hope behind the making of these films? Did you believe, like many of your contemporaries in the 60s, that film could help change the world?*

Yes, we really believed we were going to change the world. One of my favourite jokes was that I was working on the 400-year plan. Well, I'm not any more. I have no world-saving ideas left in me. I would rather see my work as an attempt to clear aesthetic areas, to free film from previous arts and ideologies, to leave it clear to be of use to men and women to create formal integrities of various kinds which might help evolve human sensibility.

Where is the avant-garde film movement that you helped to forge?

There was no movement then and there is no movement now. What we shared was the uniqueness of each of us and that each of us was true to that uniqueness in his or her making, despite all attempts by society to pigeon-hole us as a movement. But I must say that they succeeded, for the 'movement' became an aberration of the 60s – a drug-induced, sexually motivated movie-making tangent to pornography – and that's how it is seen today even in the academic community. Instead, we were a bunch of people who were dedicated to film and involved with the whole previous history of the arts in our concern to make an art. And this involvement we shared to some extent as 'moderns'. So you have a love of film, a love of art, a dedication to the arts. And one of the most vibrant ways to be dedicated to the arts is to be highly suspicious of every historical or inherited aspect of it.

What about the current scene? Do you see anything in independent film-making today that you would consider innovative?

There is much more uniqueness in film-making today than in the much-touted mid-60s. But the irony is that it is now truly 'underground'; in the 60s they said it was underground but it wasn't, now nobody says anything and it really is. It isn't affecting anybody; even the advertising agencies aren't renting their films to steal from them. And that's perhaps a good sign – that each of these film-makers is doing something so unique that there is no real way to pick up a trick. To that extent, the art of film is truly moving into a realm of its own, happily free from commercial usages.

Looking back over 40 years of film-making, what matters most now?

That I believe in song. That's what I wanted to do and I did it quite selfishly, out of my own need to come through to a voice that is comparable with song and related to all animal life on earth. I believe in the beauty of the singing of the whale; I am moved deeply at the whole range of song that the wolf makes when the moon appears, or neighbourhood dogs make – that they make their song, and this is the wonder of life on earth, and I in great humility wish to join this.

Stan Brakhage is featured in Channel 4's current 'Midnight Underground' season

Is video transforming television documentary? Are video diarists wresting power from the broadcasting professionals? And what could be the future of 'amateur' video television? Peter Keighron reports

VIDEO DIARIES: WHAT'S UP DOC?

● Video is in the vanguard of a technological revolution in television. But exactly what sort of revolution, and who's got the upper hand, is not clear. Opinions are divided: either power flows from the barrel of a camcorder, and Dixons is the people's armoury, or our every move is being surveyed and controlled by the video police in league with a cabal of media moguls.

It would be easier just to say that technology is winning. But technology is only ever created, developed and deployed within particular social, political and cultural frameworks. Technology enables certain forms of social, political and cultural manipulation but determines none. And what's interesting about video technology is that it is enabling revolutionary changes not just within the television industry but outside it, not just among professionals but among amateurs.

Video is enabling us to think about the way we define these categories and how broadcasting divides its producers from its consumers. In other words, it enables us to think about television and democracy, to reflect upon the fact that television is a source of (unelected) power for those who work in and control the industry – researchers, directors, programme-makers, producers, schedulers, broadcasters. Video is enabling us to think again about who should have that power, what they are doing with it, and why.

Such questions are being raised by the whole 'reality television' genre, so popular in the US and most successfully imitated in the UK in BBC1's 999. They are also pertinent to 'people' shows such as *You've Been Framed!* and *Caught in*

the Act. But the political nature of the question is most clearly brought into focus by *Video Diaries*, not least because of the way the series is affecting professional documentary-makers.

When *The Man Who Loves Gary Lineker* won the Flaherty award at this year's BAFTAs, it was the clearest indication yet that *Video Diaries* had moved out of the ghetto of worthiness in which access programming is invariably dumped and was now residing in the vicinity of documentary proper. While some professional film-makers may view this as a case of 'there goes the neighbourhood', for most it poses an exciting challenge.

"Without any question at all I think *Video Diaries* is the most important development in television probably since the hand-held camera itself," says documentary-maker Roger Graef. "At the cutting edge of all factual programme-making," says Channel 4's Controller of Factual Programmes Peter Salmon. "Absolutely brilliant... when they work they make people like me redundant," says documentarist Molly Dineen. And so on. If the gist of all this is that we could be living through revolutionary times in documentary-making, the question is how, exactly, will that revolution be televised?

Already professionals are attempting to integrate, some would say appropriate, the Video Diary format in different and controversial ways. In the recent series of BBC2's *40 Minutes* – the first under series editor Paul Watson – two of the documentaries use camcorders. *Will They Ring Tomorrow/A Change of Heart* uses Hi-8 cameras to follow four heart patients waiting for a transplant, while somewhat more controversially, *Away the Lads* integrates video footage taken by some Geordie 'lads' on holiday in Benidorm with professional 16mm footage.

"It absolutely stank," says *Video Diaries* editor Jeremy Gibson of *Away the Lads*. "That's what gets it a bad name." Gibson was calling foul on the way the programme exploited the 'lads' by using their footage but not giving them any editorial control. The diarist's right to editorial control is an essential part of the *Video Diaries* project. But Watson denies any misuse of the format. "I don't think it's been prescribed that nobody else should use it," he says. "It's rather like somebody inventing an engine and saying it can't be used for anything other than a car."

What Gibson is defending (though Watson would deny that is what he is attacking, since Gibson is talking about an ethic whereas Watson is talking about a product) is integrity. "There is a kind of appropriation going on and it's not just an appropriation of a technique, it's an appropriation of an integrity," says *Video Diaries* series producer Bob Long. In part, that integrity is an aesthetic. In much the same way as the shaky black-and-white images of *cinéma vérité* claimed to be somehow closer to reality than Hollywood technicolour, so the video aesthetic can promise the closest shave yet. The wobble of the image, the lurch of the autofocus, the bleeding reds all add up to a new authenticity which, claims Long, is a very tangible quality. "I think that integrity comes through not just in a kind of discussion among media people. I think that it is felt in watching a diary by the audience," he explains. "That's

one of the reasons we're liked, people do believe that it's real, that it's honest. I think people have a deep sense of seeing honesty... it's such a subtle thing, just the way someone looks at the camera, the way they're talking."

The whole 'what you are about to see is the work of an amateur' aspect of the series is no longer merely a negative apology for poor technical quality, but a positive advertisement for the integrity of the amateur. As viewers become increasingly televisually literate, ever more aware of the tricks of the trade and the constructed nature of documentary objectivity and balance, the amateur retains the power to cut through the layers of scepticism and cynicism with which we have learned to protect ourselves from the professional media, the great manipulator.

But *Video Diaries* entails not so much a replacement of the professional by the amateur, as a changing relationship between those terms. In some ways this is technologically led. The far higher ratios made possible by the economics of video (it is rare for documentary-makers to exceed a ratio of 30:1 when using film, whereas a typical *Video Diary* will use a ratio of at least 150:1) can change the whole nature of production, since much of the research and preparation can in effect be done 'in camera'. In *Video Diaries* the diarist is at different times, and often at the same time, researcher, director, producer, camera operator, sound person and editor (not to mention subject) and the role of the professional producer is in the process not so much removed as renegotiated.

The real driving force of *Video Diaries*, though, is not technology but control. The ultimate editorial control of the diarist – the amateur – is, says Bob Long, "the only thing that's set in stone." But while diarists make the final editing decisions, the *Video Diaries* professionals make the first and in some ways most important ones. They select (edit) the half dozen or so diarists in each series from the thousands of applicants and choose the political and ethical structure of the series. So if the professionals are still in control at this stage, by what authority, and on the basis of what ideologies do they wield that power?

The theory and practice of editorial control and the different ways it can be mediated have developed over the last 20 years at the BBC's Community Programme Unit (CPU). Influenced by the theory and practice of access television in the US in the late 60s and a leftist reading of Reithian public service broadcasting ideals, the CPU was set up at the BBC in the early 70s following the success of the first *Open Door* programmes. As much as any politics dares speak its name at the BBC, the CPU is, then, liberal and of the left.

These politics clearly shape not just the selection of the diarists, but the whole production process, and in particular the editing stage, during which Gibson, Long and the *Video Diaries* producers make no pretence to be disinterested technical assistants. One of their roles is to dissuade the diarist from what Gibson calls "ethically worrying" tendencies. "You're in control of your own diary and it's a great



LESS THAN 10 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT 'VIDEO DIARIES'

- 'Video Diaries' are cheap, but not that cheap. If produced outside the BBC, it's estimated that they would cost an average of between £60,000 and £70,000 an hour, around two-thirds the cost of, say, a typical Channel 4 documentary.
- Diarists do not get any fee from the BBC.
- Most diaries are shot on Panasonic MSS4 (S-VHS) camcorders, which cost £1,400. A few are done on the smaller Hi-8 format. S-VHS and Hi-8 are not yet up to the 'broadcast quality' of Betacam SP, but broadcast news is increasingly augmented by S-VHS and Hi-8 footage.
- The Community Programme Unit receives an average of about eight applications a day from would-be diarists, far more when the series is being transmitted.
- Only about 1 in 50 applications gets beyond the waste bin of the Community Programme Unit.
- Recording may take up to 12 months and diarists sometimes have up to 400 hours (with an average of around 150 hours) of material to be whittled down to one hour at the end of shooting.
- Diarists, or the BBC, can withdraw from the project at any time. Diarists have control over the final edit and all footage is joint 'property' of the diarist and the BBC; neither can use it – for example re-edit it or sell the programme to other broadcasters – without the other's agreement.

chance to be able to push yourself," says Gibson. "Your ego, and your attitude and approach, can come across from the rushes in a very off-putting way that an outsider wouldn't like. It's our job to identify that and try to turn the diarist to take a less egocentric approach to something and less pushing of aspects of their personality which are difficult or confrontational. The other thing is they may be very much in love with a very contrived material, terribly in love with some parts that we know are a total contrivance."

As Bob Long explains: "It often happens that you say, 'I believe that you felt this at the time but what I'm seeing I don't believe.' It's not just a question of we've seen through it and the gaff is blown. There are times when [the diarists] do mean what they're saying but the way they're saying it... as a viewer you just sit there saying: I don't believe you."

Again it comes back to integrity, which, as Gibson admits, is "very hard to define". But definable or not, it can be tested in at least two ways. First, by the diarists themselves ("All the diarists, I can say without exception," says Long, "have been delighted with them in the end, though through the process very often they're not"). And second, of course, by the television viewer.

If *Video Diaries* is asking essentially political questions, the programme itself is an essentially personal format, almost by definition. And the critical and popular acclaim recently accorded to more 'authored' forms of documentary-making – Molly Dineen and Nick Broomfield being, in different ways, the most obvious examples – could be taken as another

sign of a response to political pressures within documentary and current affairs.

Certainly the intense subjectivity of *Video Diaries* has eluded pressures to provide 'balance', either within particular programmes or within the series as a whole. Jeremy Gibson says that over two series of *Video Diaries* and one of *Teenage Diaries* there has never been any pressure from above. The third series, including as it does the diary of a miner's wife and the diary of a Spanish Civil War veteran International Brigadier, may test that immunity further.

The potential for more overtly political, perhaps more collective, diaries (which would not necessarily be less personal) is obvious. The recent *LA Stories* (produced by an independent American production company in conjunction with *Video Diaries*), which combined nine diarists' accounts of the year following the Rodney King riots, showed one possible future. The forthcoming *Video Nation* (in which some 60 people throughout Britain will collectively produce a video diary of the nation) shows another.

Gibson sees the most promising aspect of *Video Diaries* as coming from the way it can lead diarists or would-be diarists to think beyond the diary form. "The diary format will go on because it is a very valid way of story-telling," says Gibson, "but the next development, and one which in my mind has been remarkably slow in coming forward, will be [people thinking: 'well, we have these cameras, we can use them ourselves, why do we need to make a diary? Why can't I go and make a documentary about anything I want?']"

It is in fact over a quarter of a century since

the new technology of video enabled us to raise many of the issues of access that are only now coming to the fore (so much for the white heat of technology). One reason for this slowness is the industry's fear of the new. Television is, essentially, a very conservative medium. It is a medium whose incessant churn demands an unbroken input of new ideas, new programmes, new people, but it's precisely because those (old) broadcasters who control the medium are so dependent on the new that they distrust it and fear the uncertainty and unpredictability it entails.

Perhaps another reason is that new technology in broadcasting cuts both ways. While S-VHS and Hi-8 appear to be opening the doors of broadcasting to more of its previous passive consumers, new barriers of entry are being raised by the manufacturers' attempts to establish HDTV as the definition of broadcast quality for the future.

The most important debates to emerge around *Video Diaries* and the future of new technology in television documentary are those which raise questions about social power. Who should have access to precious broadcasting time? Who is to be allowed to document their stories, their understanding of the world we live in through the medium of television? Who should be the manipulators? One need only consider the HDTV camera in relation to the Hi-8 camcorder, or *Video Diaries* in relation to *You've Been Framed!*, to realise that, as Raymond Williams said, "the moment of any new technology is a moment of choice."

The current series of *Video Diaries* is on BBC2 on Saturdays at 10.15pm until 23 October

● Agnieszka Holland makes films about displacement, abandonment and loss – the traumas out of which identity is formed. Her new film *The Secret Garden*, adapted from a 1911 children's classic, is no exception. Like Holland's *Angry Harvest*, *Europa, Europa* and *Olivier, Olivier*, *The Secret Garden* opens with a wrenching separation. Mary Lennox, the neglected but imperious ten-year-old protagonist, loses her parents in an earthquake and is shipped from India, where she was born, to Misselthwaite Manor, a vast estate on the Yorkshire moors, to live under the guardianship of her hunchbacked uncle. But unlike Holland's previous films, *The Secret Garden* has a definitively happy ending.

The child of a Jewish father and a Polish mother, Holland has never not been alienated. "For the real Jew, I'm not Jewish, but for the Polish anti-Semite I am," she says with a casual irony that one suspects is a practised defence against despair. (Orthodox Jews believe that Jewish identity can only be passed on through the maternal line.) Her sense of being in between – a point of attack for both worlds – has made her resistant to dogma and party lines. Rather than begging acceptance, Holland has stubbornly cultivated her outsider position. From that vantage point she could see that the world is, if nothing else, complex, that everyone operates out of mixed motives.

Holland was born in Warsaw in 1948, the year Stalinism triumphed in Poland. Her father had escaped to the Soviet Union during the Second World War; his family died in the Warsaw ghetto. Her mother had worked in the Polish resistance; after the war she joined the Communist Party in the belief that the communists were the only Poles who weren't anti-Semitic. Her father edited the Young Communist newspaper and was influential during the 1956 thaw. Holland describes him as "by temperament, more anarchist than communist." When she was 11, her parents divorced. Two years later her father was arrested for "Zionism and espionage": he fell to his death from a window of the police headquarters on Christmas Eve. The authorities claimed that he committed suicide; the family believes it is more likely that he was pushed.

Because Polish anti-Semitism made the Lodz film school off-limits for her, Holland went to Czechoslovakia to study under Milos Forman. She was 17 and she badly wanted to get away from home. Not incidental to her film school education was the Prague Spring, which she remembers as "the most exhilarating and then the most depressing moment of my life". She became active in the student underground and wound up serving time in a Czech prison.

Armed with several film school shorts that she had written and directed Holland returned to Poland, where Andrzej Wajda became her mentor. Although she wrote or co-wrote about half a dozen of Wajda's films, her own projects were constantly refused by the authorities. Finally Wajda was able to strike a deal for her. Holland had written the script for his *Man of Marble*, which was considered a "difficult" film even without Holland's name attached. So Wajda agreed to omit her from the credits

Why has Agnieszka Holland, writer of Wajda's scripts and director of 'Europa, Europa' turned to a children's classic? By Amy Taubin

OUT OF THE RUINS



Lost and found: Kate Maberly as abandoned orphan Mary Lennox in 'The Secret Garden', right; Mary with Colin and Dickon, above



on condition that she would be given permission to direct a film of her own.

Banned in Poland, Holland's first three features, *Provincial Actors* (1979), *Fever* (1980) and *A Woman Alone* (1981) won major prizes at festivals abroad. Holland, who's as tough-minded about her work as she is about everything else, dismisses the first two as "historically limited" and questions whether there's a current audience for a film as depressing as *A Woman Alone*. Indeed, *A Woman Alone* may well be the grimmest film ever made, and is certainly one of the greatest. A single mother works as a postal clerk to support herself and her son. It's a life of hopeless drudgery in an unrelievedly barren environment. Her sometimes lover is a drunken foolish bully. Her son expresses his loathing of her by dropping bugs in her mouth while she sleeps. She spends her scant free time sitting at the bedside of a dying relative who she trusts will leave her some money, but is swindled out of the inheritance by a rapacious doctor and landlady.

Finally she snaps. She steals all the cheques and money orders in her mail sacks and, with her hapless boyfriend, tries to flee to the west. The plan goes awry and she winds up dead in a miserable hotel near the border. Holland refuses to aestheticise a narrative (and a situation) in which anxiety, fear and hatred are the only possible emotions. Gallows humour, which she provides in abundance, is not



enough to insulate the audience from the agony of this woman's life. Even during a period of liberalisation, this was not a film the authorities could afford to accept.

In 1981, while Holland was screening *A Woman Alone* abroad, martial law was declared in Poland. Because of her outspoken support for Solidarity, she was advised not to return. It took her nine months to get her young daughter out of the country. Eventually they settled in France (Holland is now a French citizen, though she has spent almost no time in France in the past two years).

Compared with *A Woman Alone*, her next film, *Angry Harvest* (1985), loosely based on a Second World War memoir, seems almost florid. A German co-production starring Armin Mueller-Stahl, the film explores the relationship between Poles and Jews that figures crucially in Holland's personal and professional life. The central character is a Polish Catholic farmer who shelters an upper-middle-class Austrian Jewish woman and becomes emotionally and sexually involved with her. The woman had been separated from her husband and child while escaping from a train bound for the concentration camps. Differences of class, race and religion, plus the power play implicit in the captor/captive situation, fuel a violent sado-masochistic attachment. Brutal but remarkably lucid, *Angry Harvest* lays bare the dynamics of Catholic anti-Semitism and the erotics of

hatred and contempt. As in *A Woman Alone*, the man betrays the desperate woman's trust, and as a result she dies. But unlike the earlier film, *Angry Harvest* at least offers some faint hope of redemption.

What is remarkable about both films is the degree to which Holland is able to give us access to the messiness of her characters' subjectivities. It is like being locked in a room with people who respond to terrible circumstances in terrible ways. To say Holland operates from an alienated position doesn't mean she keeps her distance – or at least not here. Although unsuccessful at the box office, *Angry Harvest* was nominated for an Academy Award for best foreign film. Holland followed it with *To Kill a Priest* (1988), a stilted Europudding about Solidarity priest Jerzy Popieluszko. As film-making, it's miscalculated from beginning to end.

Like *Angry Harvest*, the controversial *Europa, Europa* (1991), which made Holland's reputation in the US but nearly destroyed it in Europe, is a Second World War saga based on a real-life story. This one is as incredible as it's true. The Jewish teenager Salomon Perel survived the Holocaust by passing as a Polish-born German in a Nazi military academy. Holland saw the chameleon-like Solly as a *Candide* figure and shaped the film as a picaresque comedy of the absurd. Although Solly is willing to deny his identity in order to survive (and, also, out of an adolescent desire to fit in), his circumcised

penis makes it impossible for him to forget that he's a Jew. "His penis saved his soul," says Holland matter-of-factly. "Otherwise he might have become a total Nazi."

One of the rare period pieces that seems simultaneously to be about current events, *Europa, Europa* deals with Jewish identity and also with the instability and fanaticism of European nationalisms, ideologies and religions. Holland is less concerned with mapping Solly's psyche than with tracing his journey through a Europe that refuses his existence. "You know, there are two new Europes – the west and the east," Holland explained when I interviewed her in the summer of 1991. "Western Europe has become very proud; they've forgotten that their roots are not so nice. And in the east, it's the same thing only they want to be more like the west. They want to be the European New Order. But Europe, any Europe, never resolved the madness... of the Holocaust and something larger that it was a part of – the dream of making a totalitarian state that's more important than the individual. Of course there's a difference between Communism and Nazism. Communist ideology in some way was utopian. It was about social justice, while Nazism was clearly a pathology from the beginning."

In the US, *Europa, Europa* was a huge box-office and critical success. When the German export union refused to nominate the film as its candidate for the Academy Award, the Academy was scandalised and managed to include it in the Best Script Writing category. In Europe, the film was deemed confused, a sell-out to commercial interests, and anti-Semitic. As an American Jew who found the film not in the least anti-Semitic, I suspect that what really upset the film's European critics was that a director who is Polish, Jewish and female has made a mockery, not of the Holocaust, but of European nationalism and the ideologies of both left and right (not to mention her irreverent treatment of the male member).

A year after *Europa, Europa*, Holland made *Olivier, Olivier*. Although the film was, as she put it, "not about Poles, Jews, nor politics," it had some familiar elements – a boy who takes on another's identity, a dread sense of family relationships. And again it's based on a true story. A mother is extremely attached to her young son. One day the boy goes for a ride on his bicycle and is never seen again. Several years later, a police detective who has never given up on the case finds a teenage hustler who could be the missing boy. The mother embraces him as her son, even as evidence accumulates to prove him a fraud.

The terrors of maternity that were suggested in *A Woman Alone* and *Angry Harvest* are at the centre of *Olivier, Olivier*. The mother's attachment to her son – the enormous psychological effort involved in her disavowal of his death – makes her oblivious to her daughter's needs. Though marginal to the narrative, the angry daughter/mother relationship dominates the film. That same relationship is critical to Holland's version of *The Secret Garden*.

"After *Europa, Europa*, I was in Los Angeles and I was hot," says Holland amusedly. I was sent a lot of scripts, among them *The Secret* ►

◀ *Garden*. It had been my favourite book when I was a child. It seemed a way to do something I cared about but which wasn't as personal as one of my own scripts, which would have been harder to do within the Hollywood system. I was depressed after *Olivier, Olivier*. The film was very tiring for me, even more than *Europa, Europa* where I had to fight for a lighter tone. After *Olivier, Olivier*, I said I can't keep painting black on black. I would be dishonest if I kept on doing it and I didn't commit suicide and didn't want to commit suicide. So *The Secret Garden* was a gift to myself – to the lighter side of myself. It was also a moment when I asked myself, what am I doing? I felt that I had nothing to say about the changes in Europe except a cry of anger because everything is so stupid. But now, I would like to do something with substance. It's like I've been living on sweets and now I need beefsteak."

The Secret Garden may have been something of a respite for Holland, as well as a way of exploring the possibilities of making films within the Hollywood industry. But it also allowed her to uncover a source of her imaginative landscape. For Holland, as well as for Frances Hodgson Burnett, the author of the original children's novel, *The Secret Garden* involves a journey into childhood memory.

Burnett's biography reads like a typical Holland story. She was born in 1853 in Manchester to a middle-class family that slipped into poverty after her father's death four years later. When she was 12, her mother took the children to the US to live with relatives. Burnett spent the rest of her life in America making a successful living as a children's writer. Like *The Secret Garden*, her best books depict England as a mixture of gothic fairytale and pastoral idyll –

**With her own reasons:
Maggie Smith as
Mrs Medlock, the
housekeeper and most
important adult in the story**

I can't keep painting black on black. I would be dishonest if I kept on doing it and I didn't commit suicide or want to

the place where an emotionally exiled child is able to discover her true identity.

"Part of the appeal of the book," says Holland, "has to do with the child's fear of being rejected, abandoned, unloved – but also with the possibility of change. The book speaks to the symbolic imagination, but it's also very realistic. What I remember of the book was the reality of the gardens, the flowers... that they were real Yorkshire people."

An \$18 million production of Francis Ford Coppola's Zoetrope Studio for Warner Bros, *The Secret Garden* is the most intelligent and subtly erotic children's movie since *The Red Shoes*. Although Caroline Thompson's script sticks fairly closely to Burnett's original story, she and Holland make the figure of the absent mother (or mothers) more palpable, thus emphasising not only the Oedipal fantasy that animates the narrative, but also the bond between daughter and mother that is critical to the daughter's psychic development.

The orphaned Mary Lennox, who suffered her parents' neglect even when they were alive, is sent to live with her guardian and uncle Lord Craven. Lord Craven has no interest in his niece, or in anyone else for that matter. Wrapped in self-pity since the death of his wife ten years ago, he spends most of his time travelling abroad. Mary discovers a secret garden – as neglected and unwanted as she feels herself to be. The garden had belonged to Lord Craven's

wife – she may have died there in a fall from a swing – and was locked up after her death. With the help of Dickon, a farm boy who tames birds and wild animals and also has green fingers, Mary brings the garden back to life. Then she makes another discovery. She has a cousin, Colin, who was born prematurely when his mother fell from the swing. Ignored by his father and treated as an invalid since birth, Colin believes himself to be mortally ill. Mary and Dickon take him into the garden and prove that he's as healthy as any other boy. The children make a magic spell to lure Lord Craven back. Father and son are reunited. It is Mary who gave them new life and, in nurturing them, finds herself as well.

The *mise en scène* is a hybrid of Holland and Zoetrope, with sets and lighting that sometimes resemble Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and a score that occasionally echoes *The Godfather*. Holland thought she had made "a good-quality children's movie, close to Disney" until the first screening, when Coppola, the executive producer, commented, "we'll try to preserve it's eccentric quality." When the film was first shown to children, Holland sensed that "it seemed strange to them as if there was a filter between them and the movie. I worked hard to take the filter out. I didn't change a lot, but I did change the narrative energy. It wasn't a movie I made for me. I wanted to touch them. It's a gift for the audience."

The garden was obviously a central element. "When I was a child," says Holland, "I had secret places. It's the experience of kids with imagination. But I didn't realise how important gardening is for the English. I started to feel very insecure. We saw lots of gardens, but nothing was right. Then in Yorkshire we saw a garden in the Gothic ruins of an abbey that I liked, but it wasn't possible to shoot there. So we decided to build ruins in the garden that we made at Pinewood Studios. And then I realised that when I was a kid, all Warsaw was in ruins. I played in the ruins, so this garden was an emotional symbol of my childhood."

The ruins are what connect *The Secret Garden* to Holland's other films: to the crumbling shack where the woman alone lives with her son, the dismal underground hide-out in *Angry Harvest*, the bombed-out landscape of *Europa, Europa*, the lonely fields where the children play with their walkie-talkies and the dark basement where the child's body is found in *Olivier, Olivier*. The difference is that Mary finds not death but life (Eros with full Freudian implications) in the ruins. The best moments in the film have the abrupt quality of buried memories suddenly come to light: Dickon on his white pony against a bleached-out sky, the mother's hand trailing in the fountain, the larger-than-life close-ups of the robin and other birds and animals, the first green shoot Mary finds under the dry weeds and broken branches.

For all their pessimism, Holland's adult films are a protest against the state of things. Implicit in such a protest is a vision of another way of being in the world (Holland may not be a Marxist but she's a superb dialectician). *The Secret Garden* touches the source of that vision. *'The Secret Garden' opens on 15 October*



Caroline Thompson talks to
Mark Burman about the script

LONELY PEOPLE

Mark Burman: What drew you to this project?

Caroline Thompson: I had read the book as a child and like every child around and before and after me, I found that it had imagery that I never forgot. What's beautiful about the story is the metaphor of the garden into which the child goes and which she thinks is dead, but which she brings back to life. It's a beautiful little box and it's safe, though it seems frightening at first. It's very pre-adolescent: the idea that you can take this thing you are afraid of and make it bloom. Meaning the sexual and emotional self.

If you look at images of girls of that period, they are usually very prissy. 'The Secret Garden' is quite different.

I think all children think of themselves as hideous and isolated and uncomfortable and difficult. What Burnett has given us is a character who thinks she is a completely unpleasant being, and then discovers the beauty inside herself. It sounds like a horrible cliché, but I think it really is how kids feel. My own memories of childhood are that the table was always too tall or the chair too large; everything was disproportionate to your size. So for a child to be able to enter a world where everything is disproportionate and find her place in that world is something all children yearn for. The story tells kids that they too can do it.

Did you have to adapt the story to compete with current children's cinema?

It goes for a completely different feeling; it's meant to inspire and give the audience joy, but the riches are not the riches of a rollercoaster ride.

What is the attraction for you of fairy tales and children's stories?

The attraction of all stories for me is the metaphor. *The Secret Garden* has particularly vivid and lasting metaphors. There is the huge dark house with too many rooms and places that you can't even begin to explore, and then the garden with its walls and sense of safety where you can make the flowers grow. I'm often invited to seminars for fantasy writers and I doggedly refuse to attend because to me my work is more realistic than so-called realist movies because life is about what things feel like, not about the clock ticking. It is metaphors that express what things feel like: the metaphor in *Edward Scissorhands* of a man who cannot touch or be touched, cannot hold or hug, cannot participate – that's what life feels like.

There are some wonderful conceits in that film – for example, the castle perched atop pastel suburbia.

To us it was like a memory of our childhood. I had described suburbia,



On the mend: the three children conjuring up a new world in Agnieszka Holland's 'The Secret Garden'

but Tim Burton realised it in such a way that it was of no time and no place, as if it was our memories. That impulse towards honouring my memories is key to the way I approached *The Secret Garden*. When I started to look closely at the book I found that it was heavily plotted and very moralising and repetitive. So my impulse became to honour what I remembered it having felt like when I was a child.

You've changed the opening too. Why did you feel the need to do that?

It's simpler dramatically now; it opens with an earthquake rather than a plague. The plague would have given rise to some great images, but the telling of it took too much time. And the earthquake is a strong metaphor for shaking up one's life, as we who live in Los Angeles know.

Do you think 'The Secret Garden' has a different power for women than for men?

Well, you'd know better than I do – you're the man. I think it is a very strong book for women, so I'm always surprised when I meet a man who encountered it as a boy. It is about a girl child and the metaphors are female – the garden is an undeniable womb image. But I hope that boys find things in the movie as well. There's Dickon, who is very much a cipher in the book, but in the film Andrew Knott brings real life to him.

Did you look at other versions?

No, though I believe that Agnieszka has seen something of each of them. Once I turned on the television and there was the MGM version, but I quickly turned it off. Poor Margaret O'Brien was strapped into some gizmo to make her look flat-chested and they had the world in black and white and the garden in colour. I guess they got the idea from *The Wizard of Oz*, but there it was a sustained difference whereas here it became a goofy conceit.

How did you want the garden to appear on screen?

I think that what you see is a result of our collaboration. The garden has a wonderful womblake feel, it's very

expansive and extravagant and feels radically different from the rest of Misselthwaite. There is a feeling of safety there that is key to the psychology of the story.

How did you get into scriptwriting?

The director Penelope Spheeris wanted to adapt my novel *First Born* as a film and I said she could have it very cheaply if she would teach me how to write the script. The movie was optioned but never made, and soon afterwards I was introduced to Tim Burton and wrote *Edward Scissorhands*. While I was waiting for that to get going – because Tim had *Beetlejuice* and *Batman* to do – I did a few other films, one of which, *Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey*, comes out in January. It's a remake of a Disney movie from 1964 called *The Incredible Journey* – a story based on a Canadian children's book about two dogs and a cat who travel an impossible distance home. The gag here is that though it's a live-action film, we hear what the animals are thinking. Again it's the world through the point of view of creatures who are alienated from the regular rhythms that we think the everyday is composed of. I have another coming out – a musical called *Nightmare Before Christmas*. It's stop-motion animation. The music and lyrics are by Danny Elfman, I wrote the script, Tim Burton produced it and it was made by a young director named Henry Selick.

When did cinema first get its claws into you?

The first film I ever saw was *The Time Machine*. I was three, I think. The theatre was crowded and there were probably ten little boys at my brother's birthday party. I ended up sitting between two of them, neither of whom I knew. I was terrified and I was between these two strange, smelly little boys and I couldn't hide from the movie; every time I closed my eyes I was utterly petrified. I didn't go back to the movies for years and years. And in one sense that's what draws me to them – they have a real power for me. It's not a safe place to go, it's scary, and I like playing with that.

What are your plans for the future?

I'm hoping to direct. I think I won't be happy until I take more responsibility for the work. As a writer you don't exactly abdicate responsibility, but you pass on the torch to the next person, and I'd like to be the person to whom the torch is passed. It will be interesting to see if I enjoy it.

What comes first?

There's a ghost story called *Rouge* which is an adaptation of a Chinese ghost story. It's very, very sad – a story for adults. It's about a couple who kill themselves in order to be together in the hereafter, but they don't meet and so one of them comes back to look for the other and in so doing affects the lives of a contemporary couple. The story has a very sad ending which it would be criminal of me to share. It will be set in LA in the 20s and 90s. I love the 20s – it's a period in which I wish I had been alive. Especially in a place like LA, to which people emigrated to re-invent themselves. There's a lot of sadness and eagerness and excitement and desire in that. I also set the story when I did because there's a period between 1919 and 1923, according to statistics, when women shed 12 pounds of underwear. The idea of taking off your clothes and feeling free has a great appeal. I hope to be exploring some of the feelings that people set themselves free with.

How much power is there for women in Hollywood?

When people ask me if there's a disadvantage to being female, I laugh. I come from upper-middle-class WASP culture and the men from my particular slice of America have an awful lot of pressures from the start to succeed. It really does them a lot of damage, whereas being a female in the late 60s and 70s was a real advantage to me. Nobody told me "No". Nobody pressured me or thought I was going to grow up to be a doctor or a lawyer or an Indian Chief. I didn't fall for it. So I've never had a problem being a woman in my business. I know that's not true for others, but for me it was a gift.

Sight and Sound Film Review Volume May 1992 to December 1992

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In the field of lunatics

I belong to the last generation which saw cartoons in the cinema. In Israel of the 50s, the old programme held sway: newsreel, cartoon, main feature, projector breakdown, lynching of ushers. And all this for the equivalent of 5p! Verily a golden age. The cartoons were mostly Disneys. Occasionally a Terrytoon. Occasionally, Bugs Bunny. No one in the Middle East could understand Elmer Fudd. But one grew up with that Technicolor glaze.

It was only later that the world of anarchy beyond the Disney barnyard was discovered. The late 60s in London: students were revolting. In the corridors of the London School of Film Technique, as it was then known, young men in torn sweaters were hawking the collected works of Chairman Mao. But I and a colleague, Costas Chronopoulos, of Athens, escaped to the Piccadilly Circus Cartoon Theatre. There, among the drunks and loafers and public masturbators in the back row, we sat entranced by the antics of the entire crazy gang: Bugs, Elmer, Sylvester and Tweety Pie, Daffy Duck, Porky, Yosemite Sam. We discovered the names of the perpetrators: Chuck Jones, Bob McKimson, Fritz Freleng, Robert Clampett. But lo, there was an even greater maniac lurking in this field of lunatics: Tex Avery, the undisputed king.

I think he first broke into our consciousness with *Lucky Ducky* (1948). This was a George and Junior film, about two duck-hunting dogs. ("Which way did he go, George, which way did he go?") Here was something just that much crazier, that much faster and more ruthless. We came back for more.

The student rebellion was collapsing in tears throughout Europe. Heath was about to replace Wilson. But someone had already dealt with all this. Respectability, good taste, authority, logic, all had already been disposed of 25 years before. Screwball Squirrel had been unleashed, and nothing could be the same again. Yes, I know there are better Tex Averys than Screwball Squirrel. Note the masterpieces: *King Size Canary*, *Bad Luck Blackie*, *What's Buzzin' Buzzard*, the Wolf cycle. What can top a giant mouse, cat and dog, ever-expanding on a bottle of Jumbo Gro, chasing each other until they're teetering on a very unstable-looking planet Earth? Or the kitchen sinks, grand pianos, cars, aeroplanes and battleships raining from the sky on the hapless dog who crossed the black cat's path?

Dumb dog falls for corny gag

Nevertheless, Screwy is special. Droopy apart – a more successful venture at pathos – Screwy Squirrel was Tex's only attempt to foist a regular character upon the world. He appeared in 1944, ambushing a non-descript Hugh-Harmanesque rodent who's skipping along gathering nuts, with the typically Averian line: "Say, what kind of a cartoon is this going to be anyway?" "My name is Sammy Squirrel," squeaks the beast, "and this cartoon is all about me and my cute little furry friends in the forest: Wallace Woodchuck, Buster Badger, Horace Hedgehog..." "Oh yeah? Do tell!" rasps

The anarchic Tex Avery, Screwy Squirrel and the great decade of surreal animation are remembered fondly by novelist and film critic Simon Louvish

Screwy, taking the dreadful little oik behind a tree to beat it to an unseen pulp. "You wouldn't ha' liked the story anyway," says Screwy, "the funny stuff will start as soon as the phone rings."

Screwy starred in five pictures, and has, I think, the distinction of being the only cartoon character to be killed off on screen, hugged to death by the moronically strong dog Lonesome Lenny ("Ah wish ah had a liddle friend...") who is given Screwy as a companion from the Screwy Squirrel cage at the pet shop. Even Tex could see that the star was too screwy, too irredeemably ruthless and sadistic to win the hearts and minds of the audience. A star who gets the poor dog, Meathead, to chase him and fall down the cliff, taunting him with a saving net only to snatch it away in the last second ("too bad, ju-ust missed 'im!") with that infuriating gurgling laugh could not hope to be an all-American hero. ("Extra! Extra! Dumb dog falls for corny old gag!") Not to speak of tearing off the poor mutt's face with flypaper, one of the most painful gags ever committed in a cartoon. Screwy's certified insanity leaves so strong an impact that one of his cartoons, *Happy-Go-Nutty* (1944), actually prompted a letter of protest to the *Radio Times*, after a recent BBC transmission, from an outraged and unamused viewer who wrote that it would fuel prejudice against the mentally ill. ("Say, are you the dog that chases the screwy squirrels who bust outa this joint? Well, you better chase me, 'cause I'm nuttier than a fruitcake!") But it does prompt some reflection.

The American animated cartoon has, of

course, a long pedigree, from Winsor McCay through Felix, Alice, Mickey, Donald et al. It was killed off by television, with its voracious appetite for flattened, sterile banality. But there must have been a reason why its term of sustained glory, the great decade of brilliance and surreal greatness, was the 40s.

Show us your nuts

The ground for the greats was laid in the 30s, but it was the era of the Second World War which seemed to inspire the greater anarchy and mayhem. The real mayhem and horror of the war, which by 1943 was bleeding Allied soldiers in their hundreds of thousands across countless killing grounds, bred a new kind of unsentimental cynicism which was slow to be articulated in mainstream Hollywood. But the cartoon artists, lodged in their ramshackle sheds in forgotten corners of the studios, were free to let their ids go wild. The spirit of the age, the speed and ferocity of war's random violence, combined with the central cartoon premise that anything can happen and anything can be survived, emerged in the inspired lunacies of Clampett, Jones, Avery and their kind.

Look at a Hugh Harman item of 1939 or 1940, with its bug-eyed cutesy animals and risible moral tone (though some of the animation is extremely fine and complex), and at a Tom and Jerry, Daffy or any Avery of two or three years hence. Everything has changed. Disney was anarchic in the early 30s, but was soon ethically tamed. The Fleischers were played out, their depression sagas behind them. Betty Boop was trapped in the home. But in the backyard of Warner Bros and MGM, all hell had, temporarily, broken loose.

Not all that was done then can be seen now. Although we no longer see the classic cartoons in cinemas, but hunt them in the filler slots of television, censorship has still snared some of the Warner and MGM rowdiness. In the vaults of the BBC and commercial television lies a batch of untransmitted items, those known in the trade, I have to tell you, by the non-PC term of 'coon films'.

These are the 40s cartoons judged racially offensive, and indeed racist gags crop up in many 'legitimate' cartoons. Tex himself is not immune to the exploding stick of dynamite turning a dog into a black face, croaking in Stepin Fetchit accents. But many of the banned films were, ironically, satires on black jazz and musicians, like the famous Clampett *Tin Pan Alley Cats*, or his immortal *Coal Black An' De Sebben Dwarfs* (both 1943), one of the craziest cartoons in the universe.

If Little Old Bosko, a genuinely risible caricature black boy (who started life as a surreal inkblot), can leach into the transmittable canon, then surely these great masterpieces of cartoon madness can be aired. Come on BBC and Channel 4, show us your nuts! As Screwy Squirrel says, after Meathead has chased him into a pitch-dark tunnel to a crescendo of crashes and bangs: "Great gag! Pity you couldn't see it!"



Undisputed king: Tex Avery, creator of the irredeemably sadistic Screwy Squirrel

Fundamental films

On 6 December 1992 the Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led a mass of highly organised Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh cadres, a rag-tag bunch of hairy godmen and 100,000 youths representing the Shiv Sena, the Bajrang Dal and other such organisations to destroy a mosque in Ayodhya. December 6, which also saw BJP members violently assault representatives of the international news media in the presence of a man who hopes to become India's future prime minister, was followed by major riots through the country, replaying a by now familiar pattern. But the difference this time was the extent to which the conflict was televised, which inaugurated a new era in the political function of the moving image and was to have severe consequences for an industry that is the world's largest manufacturer of feature films.

During the 1984 elections, video effectively replaced print and the wall poster as the major medium of political propaganda in India. The first person to grasp the commercial potential of this was J. K. Jain, BJP member of parliament and owner of the massive Jain studios outside New Delhi. In addition to manufacturing many of the soap operas transmitted by the commercial slots on India's state-owned television network Doordashan, Jain also established, for the 1989 and 1991 elections, a monopoly on video 'raths' – Toyota vans made up like medieval chariots with built-in screens and high-definition projectors – that all political parties, regardless of ideology, had to hire if they wanted to stay in the game. This gave the BJP the capacity not only to assemble its own video propaganda, but also substantial control over the industry itself. By 1991, the BJP, backed by Jain's infrastructure, was reported to be distributing approximately 4,000 videotapes a year (about 15 per cent of India's total annual manufacture of pre-recorded video) and over 100,000 audiocassettes free, most of them containing highly inflammatory speeches by star speakers Uma Bharti and Sadhvi Rithambara, alongside shorts with special-effects 'miracle' scenes that invented a variety of myths about Ayodhya.

Self-appointed censors

Anand Patwardhan's film *Raam Ke Naam* (In the Name of God), transmitted on Channel 4 in February this year, describes many of the events surrounding Ayodhya. The film opens with extracts from a typical BJP propaganda tape proffering a legend that explains how the 'gods' reversed centuries-old oppression by putting their idols into the mosque. The events in Ayodhya, among the most extensively filmed in India's history, were covered by all the independent news 'magazines', so Patwardhan was working with an already established filmic narrative which he had to invert. Instead of the usual climax of inflamed men jumping about with *trishuls* (medieval spears) atop the mosque domes, his story ends with photographs of dead riot victims.

The pervasive narrative to which Patwardhan refers is an important part of the background to the BJP's assault on the

Distribution of video and audiocassettes, and control over parts of the film industry, are integral parts of the Hindu BJP's rise to power in India, reports Ashish Rajadhyaksha

media. It is as though the events themselves have become so enmeshed in the unprecedented forms of their recording and dissemination that it is virtually impossible to disentangle the two, or to ask the chicken-and-egg question of what came first? Certainly it is impossible to imagine this brand of far-right religious politics succeeding without the propaganda of the Jain studios' output or the barely concealed support of the *Newstrack* series or at times of Doordashan's own news policy. The problem has been confounded by the failure of Narasimha Rao's Congress government – which until three years ago controlled all news dissemination on television and radio – to grasp what is going on. The government, involved in its own liberalisation programme and in propping up the 'official' right wing of the industrial private sector, has been unable or unwilling to take on the BJP's usurping of the nationalist right as the authoritative voice of Indian history and its self-appointed role as an extra-constitutional censor.

Rambo outlaw

The problem has been more obvious and more devastating within the film industry, which in its long history has established its staple genre of the melodrama as the cultural spearhead of India's nationalist enterprise. In the riots of December and January in Bombay, followed by the mass exodus of poor and even middle-class Muslims, the film industry, led by the movie star and member of parliament Sunil Dutt and stars Dilip Kumar, Shabana Azmi and Raj Babbar, came out *en masse* to offer various kinds of assistance. This led to a large-scale retribution when police investigations into the massive bomb blasts of 12 March implicated Hanif Kadawala and Samir Hingora, the owners of Magnum Video, India's second-largest distribution company. Kadawala and Hingora were accused of gun-running, and the trail further implicated Sanjay Dutt, one of the Hindi cinema's most popular stars, and, coincidentally perhaps (though nobody believes this any more), Sunil Dutt's son. Sanjay Dutt's arrest under the Terror-

ism Act led to the withdrawal of J. P. Dutta's *Kshatriya* and the postponement of Subhash Ghai's *Khalnayak*, two of the year's most important releases, both of which feature Dutt junior.

The BJP, which was directly responsible for this, then called a meeting with the Film Makers' Combine and hammered out a resolution that, in effect, forbids the industry to employ anyone accused of involvement with the blasts. The understanding then continued: no one of Pakistani origins (including former Raj Kapoor star Zeba Bakhtiar, and Mohsin Khan) was to be employed; no one who was not a member of a political party should be allowed to speak on politics; and most damagingly of all, the BJP retains the right to censor parts of any Hindi films likely to "hurt Hindu sentiment". The Shiv Sena, BJP's Bombay partner which controls much of the city's trades union movement and has previously run vicious anti-South Indian, anti-Gujarati and anti-Dalit campaigns, then called for a ban on A. K. Hangal, veteran actor and former member of the radical Indian Peoples' Theatre Association, alleging that he had accepted an invitation from the Pakistani High Commission.

It has been claimed that some of this massive display of political muscle in the movie industry deals with the obviously questionable structure of the industry's finances. It seems that Bombay's criminal underworld, the site of several extensively reported tussles between Dubai-based Dawood Ibrahim, who runs much of the city's protection racket, gangs aligned with the Shiv Sena, and a politically powerful group allied with the Congress Party, has moved into the film industry (see 'Bombay Film Industry: Underworld Connections' in *India Today*, 15 May 1993). But this is less significant than the new melodramas that reflect this political reality. The new money is spawning a new genre: the hero these days is typically a Rambo outlaw, gang leader or vigilante, the villain a South Indian, Bihari or Muslim. And the happy ending is often the moral, and sometimes the physical, defeat of the Indian state.



Media meet politics: Hindu zealots prepare to tear apart the mosque in Ayodhya

Lost again

For the third time in its history the MacTaggart Lecture, which annually inaugurates the Edinburgh International Television Festival, was this year dangerously entrusted to a writer, perhaps the most justly celebrated dramatist of the medium in this country: Dennis Potter. His beautifully wrought peroration against the management exigencies of the present BBC culminated with his by no means ironic application for the post of Chairman of the Governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

As the radioactive half-life of his self-styled "barricade of metaphors" continued to glitter throughout the rest of the festival, one other television writer became increasingly perplexed. It was not so much puzzlement as to what Potter had proposed – that was readily comprehensible, at least in the case of the BBC. No, it was more the question of what those of us more recent mendicants in the curved corridors of Broadcasting House (those whose memories do not encompass the mythological Golden Age when, we are told, even if the BBC was regulated by patronising bureaucrats, its programmes were not policed by accountants), are supposed to do about it all.

Towards the beginning of his speech, Potter said: "If I were starting out today as a writer who is able to persuade himself on at least two days of the week that drama or fiction is one of the last few remaining acres of possible truth-telling left to us in our over-manipulated and news-stuffed world, then I doubt very much that I would deliberately choose, as I did, to begin in television as it is now controlled, owned and organised." It is hard to see this as anything other than a scantily-clad insult for those of us (many of whom wish to work in television because it was there we first witnessed the liberating possibilities of drama as provided by people like Dennis Potter) who persist in thinking that the potential relationship between a writer and his/her audience offered by television in this country has not been entirely destroyed by the increasingly frantic and cack-handed attacks on what had been assumed to be the givens of civic society. Presumably our very presence in the medium is witness to nothing more than the compliance and complacency with which we must welcome the iniquities of the current system – with a smile on our faces and 30 pieces of silver in our mucky, complicit hands.

Good then, crap now

Equally, such words will come as no comfort to those would-be dramatists who are but one-third of Potter's age and half of mine, whose Epiphanies in the presence of a television set are no less valid nor inspiring simply for having taken place 50 years after his own. Where would Potter channel his creative desire only to connect these days? Towards the literary novel, where he would be assured of a self-regarding notice by others of that ilk in the arts pages of the broadsheets and a print run of 2,500? Or towards the theatre, where he would find a politically motivated decimation of local



Dennis Potter: more melancholic than vitriolic

Did Dennis Potter's passionate attack on current television disguise a contempt for writers younger than himself and for the possibilities television may still contain, asks Michael Eaton?

authority resources far more extreme than that in his chosen medium, coupled with harassed administrators who entered the arena because of their commitment to drama but whose time is increasingly taken up begging for sponsorship deals from the manufacturers of alcoholic drinks?

Television, however it has changed, is still the place for those of us who wish to use drama to ask questions of the world we live in, to challenge the assumptions of worlds we have inherited and to fantasise about the potentials of worlds to come – especially, that is, if we wish to talk with others who, though they might not share our assumptions, nevertheless constitute a wider audience than the people we are likely to bump into when we browse in Waterstone's or amble into the Royal Court. I suspect that making programmes like Potter's own was no more easy when he started out than it is now. Certainly it has been my experience that there are still people working within the BBC today who, products of the period which has forced upon us the transformation of 'citizen' into 'consumer' though they be, still wish to do more with their medium than to give some the power to shop while allowing others only to dream of shopping.

Nostalgia, as any crossword doer will tell you, is an anagram of 'lost again'. Dennis Potter is far too smart to allow himself to be accused of being hopelessly lost in his own blue remembered hills, which he has evoked for us in their horror as well as their splendour. He would be the first to dispute the actual existence of a Golden Age, while at the same time insisting on the necessity of clinging on to the image of such a lost utopia, if only as a metaphor. But beyond the metaphorical, a definite tone emerges that things were good then and they're crap now. I take him on trust that he believes that, but how is it supposed to effect what we who have only heard of the 'then' do about the 'now'?

The Bible, of course, begins in Eden and ends in Paradise. But in between Genesis

Then and Apocalypse to Come are tales of familial conflict, military conquest, personal damnation and redemption. The conditions for the existence of such stories and the forms in which they are told must necessarily transform from age to age unless we are content to ascribe authorship entirely to the hand of an unseen potentate, terrestrial or otherwise.

Potter is more melancholic than vitriolic when he evokes the betrayal of "what I may unwisely have termed a sense of Vocation... [which] was born, of course, from the already aborted dream of a common culture, which has long since been zapped into glistening fragments by those who are now the real, if not always recognised, occupying powers of our culture."

The careful phraseology allows an interlocutor, motivated only by the desire to know more, precious little point of entry. If the "dream" of a common culture was already "aborted", then was the writer's vocation already founded upon an illusion? If so, why was this not a barrier to keep him from writing? What were the forces that had already conspired to ensure this democratic dream would be still-born? How do they differ from, how are they more benevolent than today's "occupying powers"? How should those forces be challenged? If a common culture was always a fantasy, then is it the death of the *dream* that we should be mourning?

Learning to sing

We do not have to subscribe to the thoughts of Chairman Derrida and his fellow postmen to see that the economic organisation of the world is rather different today than it was when the young Dennis Potter was transported from his own heavily circumscribed reality in the pre-war Forest of Dean by the etheric wonders of the wireless set. Or to recognise that developments in mass communications are, to an arguable degree, responsible for the fragmentation of the bogus hegemonic culture from above that existed in those days. Since then we have, I hope, learned to see 'culture' as a wider, more anthropological concept than something vaguely synonymous with aesthetics.

Nowhere in his MacTaggart Lecture did Potter speak more movingly than when he characterised the educational ladder which inexorably led him away from his childhood, his community, his class: "You are made to feel a little different, and then you want to be different: and although you know what you gain with your little Latin and less Greek, you do not for a long time realise what you have lost." I know exactly what he means. But I wish he might be a little more predisposed to recognise that after the protracted wake for an industrial and imperial society that has been my generation's experience, other, necessarily more diverse, diffuse and fragmented voices may learn to sing. The task ahead of us is to ensure that one primary location for these songs will continue to be through the warping, shifting and shaping of a metaphor I assume both Potter and myself would distrust, the "mirror in the corner".

Two rode together

Lem Dobbs

A Siegel Film: An Autobiography

Don Siegel, Faber and Faber, £20, 500pp

Just Tell Me When to Cry: A Memoir

Richard Fleischer, Carroll and Graf, \$21, 349pp

Directors' autobiographies are the last word on screen authorship. Walsh's was as brash as Capra's was corny, Buñuel's was surreal, Powell's phantasmagorical, Boetticher's half-crazed, and Huston's a tall tale. Those of Siegel and Fleischer, though sorely lacking in content, are at least true to form. Siegel was a child of the moviola (he began his career in the montage department at Warner Bros), Fleischer of cartoons (his father Max created Popeye). Accordingly, Siegel has called his book a film, conceived it (unfortunately) in scenes and written it (disastrously) with an overreliance on scripted dialogue. His intended reader is the cinephile. Fleischer, exploiting public appetite for Hollywood gossip, wants only to entertain, to bring monstrous characters to life (Rex, Orson, Kirk, Darryl...) in a series of humorous/horrendous sketches, with no regard whatever for the artistic trajectory of his career. Though he has directed almost 50 films, only 27 are in the index. A mere 17 are discussed at any length, in so far as they provide material for anecdote – and half of these in abbreviated form.

It is this very self-effacement that in the long run left Fleischer lagging in the auteur foot race and found Siegel on the pedestal, surrounded by *Positif* and *Movie* critics. Thus encouraged, Siegel ploughs through his *oeuvre* in stultifying detail. Fleischer's most interesting films maddeningly go unmentioned. Buffs will find no clues in his genial book to the murderous sexual pathology that links many of them. On the other hand, if you've always wanted to read a

seven-page synopsis of the plot of *Rough Cut*, Siegel's book has it for you.

While in interviews he was charming, witty and responsive, in 500 unmediated pages Siegel has managed to achieve something less personally expressive than *Duel at Silver Creek*. At times so poorly written as to defy understanding, it's the kind of thing more usually found in library collections of unpublished papers, which may explain its posthumous appearance from a British specialist in film books. Misleadingly subtitled *An Autobiography*, it's nothing of the kind. Instead it's this: Siegel somehow gets involved in a project without a script, valiantly cobbles one together despite the worst efforts of a bunch of faceless hacks, and finds himself on location staging an intricate car stunt, the mechanics of which he's sure are as exciting to read about as to watch – interspersed with transcribed conversation of the 'How I Found Livingstone' school: awkward, mawkish, phoney. (Don Siegel, by the way, is one of my favourite directors.)

The naiveté of the two men, who otherwise present themselves as world-weary, is at times remarkable. The director of *Compulsion* professes amazement at distinguished British playwright Terence Rattigan's interest in scripting *The Boston Strangler*, about a misogynist murderer of women, and wonders why he keeps asking about the Strangler's penis size. The director of *Madigan*, who may have heard that that film's final shoot-out is "among the best examples of action-montage in cinema" (Sarris), has no more idea of how to convey his inspiration in making it than to list – for 12 mind-numbing pages – his entire shot breakdown, something we could duly (and dully) do for ourselves, though it's an utterly pointless (and incomprehensible) exercise without the visual accompaniment of the images themselves. In short, Siegel the writer lacks an editor.

Both directed their first film in 1946

(though both sense the way to hook a reader is to start out of chronology with a John Wayne reminiscence). Both contributed significantly to *film noir*. (Both mention with regret the loss of *Bad Day at Black Rock* to John Sturges.) Both excelled at films about killers (Siegel's are professionals, Fleischer's gifted amateurs). Siegel never met a producer who wasn't an idiot, a studio that wasn't stupid (*The Last of the Independents*, original title of the great *Charley Varick*, was quintessential Siegel); Fleischer's career can be defined by a triple alliance: RKO-the Zanucks-Dino De Laurentiis (with a notable detour to Disney). Siegel never strayed far from modest-scale tough-guy movies; Fleischer rode the showman's whirlygig, his you-gotta-have-a-gimmick aesthetic encompassing sequels, remakes, 3-D, CinemaScope, split-screen, Showscan, Italian-made spectacles, Jack Palance as Fidel Castro, microscopic submarines and giant squids, people who eat people – and talk to the animals.

It is ultimately instructive that while cantankerous Siegel has gone to his reward (his progeny too: Sam Peckinpah referred to him as *patron*), Fleischer remains at home in today's Hollywood, even now preparing a feature version of his father's animated flapper Betty Boop. Still, in the 70s Fleischer directed a streak of films that constitutes a unique Cinema of Depression: *10 Rillington Place*, *The Last Run*, *The New Centurions*, *Soylent Green*, *The Spikes Gang* – and the extraordinary *Mandingo*, a movie that now seems more startling than *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Fleischer's character, like that of his protagonists, is divided (who else would agree to co-direct a film with Kurosawa?) and perhaps he does offer a clue to it, after all: in a chilling encounter with D. W. Griffith that is his book's best memory.

Directors are the last people to look to for insights into their work, particularly those who toiled for so long in the genre underworld and emerged into the new dawn of signs and meaning in the cinema blinking in bemused bewilderment (the saltmines sequence of Fleischer's *Barabbas* is one of his finest). Scholars will want to slog through Siegel, if only out of compulsion. More readers are likely to find themselves beguiled by Fleischer.

Classics illustrated

Ian Christie

The Films of Roberto Rossellini

Peter Bondanella, Cambridge University Press, £27.95 (hb), £9.95 (pb), 183pp

The Films of Alfred Hitchcock

David Sterritt, Cambridge University Press, £27.95 (hb), £7.95 (pb), 165pp

The Films of Woody Allen

Sam B. Girgus, Cambridge University Press, £22.95 (hb), £7.95 (pb), 146pp

The Films of Wim Wenders

Robert Phillip Kolker and Peter Beicken, Cambridge University Press, £27.95 (hb), £7.95 (pb), 197pp

Avant-garde Film

Scott MacDonald, Cambridge University Press, £27.95 (hb), £9.95 (pb), 199pp

A recent *Times Literary Supplement* column poked fun at a new series of Open University textbooks called 'Theory in Practice', mocking the way Byron and other classic





Two rode together: Don Siegel's critically acclaimed 'Madigan', above, and Richard Fleischer's extraordinary 'Mandingo', opposite, testify to these veteran directors' will to survive in Hollywood

authors are used to "enhance our appreciation of different theorists". Typical curmudgeonly stuff, perhaps, but after sampling the new Cambridge Film Classics series, I must confess to a twinge of sympathy. Not that the Cambridge series has any aspirations to teach critical theory through cinema – it might be more interesting if it had – but what is clearly being served up as classroom fodder is the auteurism of the 60s and 70s.

To anyone who can remember pitched battles over Hitchcock and Fuller, or wondering what a film by Rossellini or Ophüls was actually *like* (when you could read about them but see hardly any), the fruits of victory have a disappointingly bland taste. Gone is the excitement of the hunt for rare and potentially deviant films, the discovery of pattern and purpose in seemingly marginal, broken careers, and the struggle against traditionalist complacency. Now, in place of Seghers' *Cinéma d'aujourd'hui* mini-dossiers and the often alarming inconsistency of the Studio Vista, Movie and Tantivy pocket-book series, we have Michelin Guides to the teachable canon: reliable, responsible and *dull*. This, one realises, must be what Eng Lit critics feel like as they survey the rising tide of teaching aids – at least those who are not engaged in that very industry.

Of course, the situation in cinema studies is still far from academic grid-lock, and the first batch of Cambridge books has many individual virtues. But what does it tell us about the progress of the 'classic' in cinema? In his Eliot Lectures on 'The Classic' (based on Eliot's own seminal paper 'What is a Classic?'), Frank Kermode traced the trajectory of the classic from its Virgilian origins to its modernist crisis. His account is highly suggestive when applied to cinema.

Initially, Kermode shows, the classic

author was a standard, the ideal exemplar of a civilisation. This sense of classic is intrinsically linked with originality, mastery and tradition. In cinema, it means Méliès, Griffith, Chaplin, Eisenstein, perhaps Lubitsch and Flaherty: the founding fathers, creators of forms and often of national cinemas, empire builders in the New World of the industrial image. But as Kermode reveals, disagreements about classic status are almost as old as the idea itself. From at least 800AD, the claims of the 'modern' have been in conflict with the canon of classic antiquity. When Dante incorporated Virgil into his founding masterpiece of the new literary language of the "noble vernacular", he also performed a function that was to prove vital for the future of the classics. Virgil becomes a figure in the Dantean allegory; and allegorising – tracing a later meaning in an earlier work by reinterpreting it – is identified by Kermode as one of the ways in which "old texts are accommodated to modern cultures".

What paved the way for this interpretative license, as Kermode explains, was the emergence of the modern classic, which "offers itself only to readings which are encouraged by its failure to give a definitive account of itself." So we arrive at the modern classic as a dysfunctional text; later to be joined by the modernist proto-classic, à la Joyce, Pound, Stein, as a deliberately puzzling or paradoxical text.

Cinema grew up amid the battles around modernism, but remained relatively innocent of such matters (other than in experimental shorts) until a later, post-Second World War stage of its development. Then debates over realism and naturalism erupted, narrative was decentred and fragmented, reflexivity and abstraction returned and, in the course of the 60s, cinema recapitulated a riotous, carnivalesque reworking of the previous century's art his-

tory. During this time of revolt against authority, classics were the last thing on the agenda, unless they were relevant. It was the heyday of auteurism, which created 'film studies' as an autonomous discipline within the humanities.

The new auteurist canon amounted to a rejection of the first 'film society' pantheon. In place of Griffith, Chaplin, Eisenstein *et al*, together with such provisional modern candidates as Pabst, Vidor and de Sica, there were now Keaton, Lang, Buñuel, Renoir, Hawks, Hitchcock, Vertov, Sirk, Sturges (Preston), Rossellini, Fuller, Tashlin, Powell – and, at least for many Europeans, Ray (Nicholas), Preminger and Minnelli. Other long careers, like that of Ford, underwent re-evaluation, with the socially conscious losing ground to the mythic, the quirkily anecdotal and the self-referential. Eisenstein's *The Strike* and *Ivan the Terrible* emerged from behind the heroic *Potemkin* and *Nevsky* to claim their due.

Auteurism successfully negotiated the entry into classic status of a wider range of works and creators – and it legitimated what the emergent film intelligentsia enjoyed watching. There were many factors involved in creating the new paradigm: the growth of film festivals and social and cultural events; television's need to buy and produce films on a broader basis; the emergence of self-educated film specialists who might pass from journalism into distribution (it was the heyday of alternative distributors, who were often vital catalysts) and on into production. There now existed a profession-in-waiting, ready to become the interpreters of the new canon.

Kermode has stressed the importance of who 'owns' canons, both sacred and secular. Crucially, there is an interdependence between the status of a canon and the ability of an institution or profession to defend, modify and extend the canon that pro- ►

◀ vides its *raison d'être*. Teaching and research, the interior processes of transmission and modification, keep the canon (and its supporters) alive – although they may sometimes seem to be strangling it in verbiage. Auteurism started out as an attack on the academy that rejected cinema, launched from outside its walls: a political, methodological and generational challenge. Twenty-five years on, it has become the new academicism, largely because the cutting edge of film scholarship has now moved away from allegorising accommodation towards a more ambitious historiography, both empirical and scrupulously interpretative, in another of those swings which we can only begin to explain after the event. Meanwhile, there are classes to prepare, reading lists to draw up and profits to be made by shrewd publishers.

Cambridge's new series aims at a decent, responsible level of critical analysis, combined with basic filmographic, bibliographic and – a welcome novelty this – availability information. Compared with either the varied texture of the Seghers *Cinéma d'aujourd'hui* series or the first-person style of Faber's interview-based books, the effect is homogeneous, rather sedate and occasionally pedantic. Long careers, such as those of Hitchcock and Rossellini, are surveyed in outline, before a selection of "key films" is discussed in detail. Nothing to complain about in this, since it keeps the books to an affordable 150-180 pages and ensures that what is analysed gets adequate space. Unfortunately, the effect is sometimes to take the auteurs to task over how well they have exemplified the supposed themes of their *oeuvre*.

Thus Peter Bondanella in *Rossellini* finds himself in a tight spot at the end of his chapter on *Roma città aperta*, defending Rossellini against charges of inadequate modernism and conceding that the neo-realism of this film is more conservative than that of *Paisà*. A final chapter on *La Prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV* at least brings one of Rossellini's television films into the putative canon, but again falls victim to a somewhat mechanical debate on Rossellini's "influences". A passing swipe by Bondanella at "the kind of politically correct thinking which has become part of so much contemporary academic writing", suggests he is unaware of being a part of that problem.

David Sterritt's *Hitchcock* has a different kind of problem. The choice of films for close analysis faithfully reflects the post-Robin Wood consensus on the Hitchcock 'internal canon' – *Shadow of a Doubt*, *The Wrong Man*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho* and *The Birds* – with the interesting addition of *Blackmail* as a kind of generative model. Each chapter dutifully traces familiar themes of guilt, fear of chaos, voyeurism, plus Sterritt's own preferred theme of "performance". But I suspect there is a revisionist impulse seeking to escape the series straitjacket, for it is noticeable that the very brief accounts of *The Trouble With Harry* and *Marnie* carry greater conviction and offer more insight than the set-piece chapters. Original auteurs knew that hard cases make better criticism.

What makes Woody Allen a candidate for classic status? Sam Girgus has no doubt that all his films from *Play It Again, Sam* onwards follow "a master narrative of transformation and invented identity". Well, yes – but



Shooting canons: what are the qualities that make Rossellini's 'Paisà', above, worthy of the status of a modern classic?

for Girgus, clearly from his jacket biography an Americanist, their significance lies in Allen's understanding "how the experiences of loss, alienation, and uncertainty occur concomitantly with the joy, excitement, and anticipation of individual and cultural renewal". In this, he acutely says, they show "a unique American quality". What is perhaps of more concern to film students is Allen's preoccupation with the history of cinema and, literally, his place in it – all the way from his reworking of *What's Up Tiger Lily?* to *Shadows and Fog*. This, too, is perhaps "distinctively American", but it is also a vital strand in what might make Allen a post-modern classic.

If Wenders seems a more plausible modern classic, this may be because he has so systematically inserted himself into the mythology of modern cinema and internationalised his work. But there is a problem in spelling out what is so often simply shown or revealed in Wenders' spare, studied images. Robert Phillip Kolker and Peter Beicken often stray into cloudy efforts to generalise what is at least concrete, if sometimes obscure, in the films. When they turn from abstractions to contrast Wenders favourably with his German contemporaries, this leads them to a ludicrously dismissive characterisation of Edgar Reitz's first *Heimat* as a simplistic, affirmative television series. Nor does their attempt to apply classic structuralist oppositions, such as country versus city, to Wenders' work prove particularly illuminating – except as a pedagogic exercise.

Scott MacDonald's *Avant-garde Film* follows a somewhat different pattern from the other titles, with 15 essays on independent film-makers ranging from Michael Snow, Hollis Frampton and Ernie Gehr, via Mulvey

and Wollen (*Riddles of the Sphinx*) and Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi (*From the Pole to the Equator*) to Warren Sonbert, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Yvonne Rainer and Peter Watkins. Here there is a welcome attempt to open up some real diversity, questioning the hetero male hegemony of the 'structural film' tradition, and the tendency to define it in almost exclusively American terms. Interestingly, MacDonald chooses Rainer's most European film, *Journeys from Berlin*, as his film à thèse.

What can be seen in MacDonald's book is canon-making and questioning at work. In effect, he charts a shift from the canon of *ArtForum* magazine and *Anthology Film Archives* towards one that might be linked with the theoretical journal *October*, defined by its awareness of ideological, gender and geopolitical issues. Cinema studies may be paying the inevitable price of its success by undergoing academicisation, but there are still enough border disputes to ensure that the canon continues to be controversial and vigorously contested. It is still better than being in Eng Lit.

Dishing the dirt

Beverley Skeggs

Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power

Pamela Church Gibson and Roma Gibson (eds), BFI Publishing, £29.95 (hb), £12.95 (pb), 238pp

At a recent BFI conference, confirmation of the extent to which the anti-pornography positions of US campaigners Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon have become part of the establishment was given when James Ferman of the British Board of Film Classification declared that the meeting was one-sided, not pro-women and should take into account pro-censorship perspectives. This worries me. I was once a confirmed anti-pornography feminist activist. I even recruited a group of striking miners to help me superglue and graffiti the local sex shop. But I'm beginning to change my mind.

Dirty Looks represents a paradigm shift in feminist responses to pornography. The old arguments hinged on knowing that pornography was bad for women; the new arguments, centring on representation, problematise what 'knowing' about pornography actually means. *Dirty Looks* questions any idea of a correct reading. As Carol Clover notes in the introduction, pornography attacks our most basic sense of how to understand culture.

Dirty Looks pulls together a diverse group of writers, subjects and styles. The contributors, who range from feminist film-makers to academics, use methods from the confessional and conversational to densely argued debates on identity and hermeneutics. One of the book's pleasures is its revelation of the many types of pornography available. The personal columns of transvestite magazines (studied by Laura Kipnis) and the babyists who want to wear nappies and be ordered around a playpen seem worlds apart from the danger and brutality crucial to anti-porn arguments. Although the narratives of S/M sex workers, retold by Anne McClintock, give an edge to the silliness of much pornography, *Dirty Looks* makes you wonder what all the fuss has been about.

Indeed, one weakness of the book is that it fails to address the possible problems of pornography – such as the way in which it facilitates sexual harassment of women on a daily basis in the office or street. An editorial account of why and how the contributions were put together might have shed light on this omission.

Another problem is the proliferation of uncritical references to Judith Butler's theories of how repetition constructs gender identities, taken up by three contributors. It is also irritating that so much is claimed as subversion, without any clarification of what this means. Photographer Grace Lau states that her work is subversive; film-makers Bette Gordon and Karyn Kay maintain that the investigation of pornography is a radical act in itself (tell that to the Meese Commission); Anne McClintock's repeated claims for the subversive potential of S/M eventually make it sound dull and normal.

Chris Straayer and Linda Williams each contribute a chapter on pornographer and performance artist Annie Sprinkle, describing the ways in which her performance 'Post-Post-Porn Modernist' unsettles gender boundaries. Sprinkle's work problematises the essentialising, naturalising and authenticating of the female subject. She draws attention to her body as constructed and to femininity as performance, using artifice to demystify the construction of sexiness. Advice and sex education are often integrated into her shows and videos, but so is nurturing the male ego. Sprinkle also visualises the female orgasm, which Straayer argues is (guess what?) subversive, since most pornographic representations involve a "privilege of unknowing" about female sexuality. Drawing on the same performance and similar arguments, Williams comes to a different conclusion – that heterosexual pornography is about the desire to know the source of female sexuality.

By deconstructing the art-erotic/porn dichotomy, Lynda Nead broadens the debate, noting that the artistic and pornographic are not simply properties of any given representation, but are also classifications for those who look at the images. Views about porn, she argues, are usually indicative of social rank, and one of its powers is its capacity to establish and reproduce cultural distinctions. Pornography deals directly with bodies, has few pretensions and does not require specialist knowledge to understand it. This is why it will always be located in the popular and why scholarly critiques are paradoxical. Many of the contributions to *Dirty Looks* do depend on a prior understanding of feminist debates on subjectivity, representation and sexuality.

The disparate nature of the articles in *Dirty Looks* means that pornography is revealed as a diverse and ambiguous regime of representation which produces and reproduces wider cultural distinctions. Given that pornography can acquire a radical charge as a symbol of liberation in opposition to the state, as in Eastern Europe, we need an analysis which can account for its different status in different circumstances. *Dirty Looks* is an important intervention, challenging certainties and 'truths' in what is sure to be a prolonged debate. It also raises some fascinating questions – such as why do transvestites always have matching bedspreads and curtains?

Heavy traffic

Ben Thompson

Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), Routledge, £35 (hb), £12.99 (pb), 215pp

This collection of ten essays, written between 1986 and 1991, is better served by its main than its sub-title. It's not just music video that is dealt with here, but wider questions of music's relationship with film, television and post-modern theory. More problematically, *The Music Video Reader* invites an obvious anti-intellectual objection – you don't read music videos, you watch and listen to them – which in this instance has substance.

The pleasures of video surround those of music in the way that biodegradable plastic wrapping surrounds toilet cistern cleaning blocks. They are the first things you have to get to grips with, but they quickly disintegrate in the memory, leaving the main product to do its work. This in-built ephemerality and quick-change development do not suit the long turnaround times and gestation periods of academic publishing. All but two of the contributors here are academics. All but one – Simon Frith – are from the US or Canada, and there is a lot of North American campus log-rolling to get through before you get to the good stuff.

Will Straw's opening essay, 'Popular Music and Post-Modernism in the 1980s', would seem to be an elaborate conceptual joke. How else to explain the following as an opening sentence for a book about the briefest and most delightfully disposable of cultural forms? "One of the most striking things about recent writing on music video is its pivotal and symptomatic role within a number of disciplinary and theoretical realignments upon the larger terrain of cultural theory." Phew, rock 'n' roll. The subsequent investigations of "textual form as 'grid'" and "the palimpsestic quality of post-modern texts" signpost a problem which afflicts several of the essays here.

More disconcerting are the rapid switches from theoretical scalpel to aesthetic sledgehammer. Lawrence Grossberg's concluding essay on 'Cinema, Post-modern-

nity and Authenticity' is the worst offender here. His subject – music and youth in the brat-pack films of the 80s – is interesting, but the excitement of new vistas opening up is clouded by the flip judgmental tone. Jonathan Kaplan's *Over the Edge* is "certainly one of the greatest youth films of all time", while *Breaking Glass* "deserved its failure". Yeah, right. And calling *The Breakfast Club* "a tragic statement of youth's continued desire to stop becoming their parents" would seem to be going a bit far. There is just not enough emphasis there on that word tragic.

All too often the assumption seems to be that the reader will have no knowledge of the cultural forms discussed. Kobena Mercer's triumphant conclusion to his analysis of Michael Jackson's 'Thriller' – that the transformation at the end of the video could be seen as a "metaphor for the aesthetic reconstruction of Michael Jackson's face" (his italics) – will not be news to any self-respecting seven-year-old. But the 'Video Analysis' section from which this essay comes is still by far the most interesting. Mark Fenster's 'The Development of Country Music Video' is conscientious and well researched, if not exactly controversial. Lisa Lewis' 'Being Discovered: The Emergence of Female Address on MTV' goes beyond the standard wisdoms of female representation in pop video to examine how performers like Madonna, Cyndi Lauper, Tina Turner and Pat Benatar turned the gender conventions of the medium to their own advantage.

Robert Walser's 'Heavy Metal Sounds and Images of Gender' ventures into even less well-charted territory. It starts unpromisingly, with a quote from Guy Debord and a gratuitous reference to Orpheus, but blossoms when it gets down to the metallic nitty gritty. Walser obviously knows his Dokken from his Poison, and succeeds in considering sound and vision at the same time without losing his grip, lifting the traditional blanket dismissal of heavy metal's sexist bluster to reveal a fascinating *ménage à trois* of androgyny, romance and masculine fear. These last two essays, by proving how interesting this collection might have been (where are the pieces on the work ethic in the early videos of Spandau Ballet, or Duran Duran and the collapse of empire?) rather show up the rest.

Horns of a dilemma: is John Hughes' teen comedy 'The Breakfast Club' a tragic statement of the reluctance of youth to end up just like their parents?



REVIEWS

Reviews,
synopses and
full credits for
all the month's
new films

Anchoress

United Kingdom/Belgium 1993

Director: Chris Newby

Certificate

12

Distributor

BFI

Production Companies

BFI (London)/Corsan
Productions (Antwerp)
In association with the
Ministry of the Flemish
Community/BRTN/
ASLK-CGER/Nationale
Loterij-Loterie
Nationale/Channel
Four Television

Producers

Paul Breuls
Ben Gibson

Executive in Charge of Production

Angela Topping

Line Producer

Julie Baines

Associate Producers

Judith Stanley-Smith
Catherine Vandeleene

Location Manager

Lieve Vyncke

Casting

Janet Goddard
Belgium:

Patrick Hella

Assistant Directors

Cilla Ware

Johan Seeuws

Screenplay

Judith Stanley-Smith
Christine Watkins

Director of Photography

Michel Baudour

Black and white

Editor

Brand Thumin

Production Designer

Niek Kortekaas

Set Dressers

Marsha Roddy
Mai Gulbrandsen

Sculptures

Marcel Decieir

Special Effects

Harry Wiessenhaan
Rob Wiessenhaan

Music Extracts

"Polegnala e Todora"
from "Le Mystère des
Voix Bulgares"

Costume Design

Annie Symons

Costume Supervisor

Clare Ditchburn

Wardrobe Supervisor

Sabina Kumeling

Make-up

Karin van Dyk
Lia van der Horst
Leni Teulings
Cynthia van der Linden
Pilo Pilkes

Sound Editors

Dialogue:

Martin Evans

Dubbing:

Kant Pan

Sound Recordist

André Patrouillie

Dolby stereo

Cast

Natalie Morse

Christine Carpenter

Eugene Bervoets

Reeve

Toyah Willcox

Pauline Carpenter

Peter Postlethwaite

William Carpenter

Christopher Eccleston

Priest

Michael Pas

Drover

Brenda Bertin

Meg Carpenter

Annette Badland

Mary

Veronica Quilligan

Daisy

Julie T Wallace

Bertha

Ann Way

Alice

François Beukelaers

Bishop

Jan Decleir

Mason

David Boyce

Ragged Martin

Micke de Groote

Ragged Martin's Wife

Erik Konstantyn

Carter

Guy Pion

Innkeeper

Peter van Asbroeck

Dyer

Grant Oatley

Oswald

Timothy Barlow

Old Pilgrim

Hugo Harold Harrison

Priest's Boy

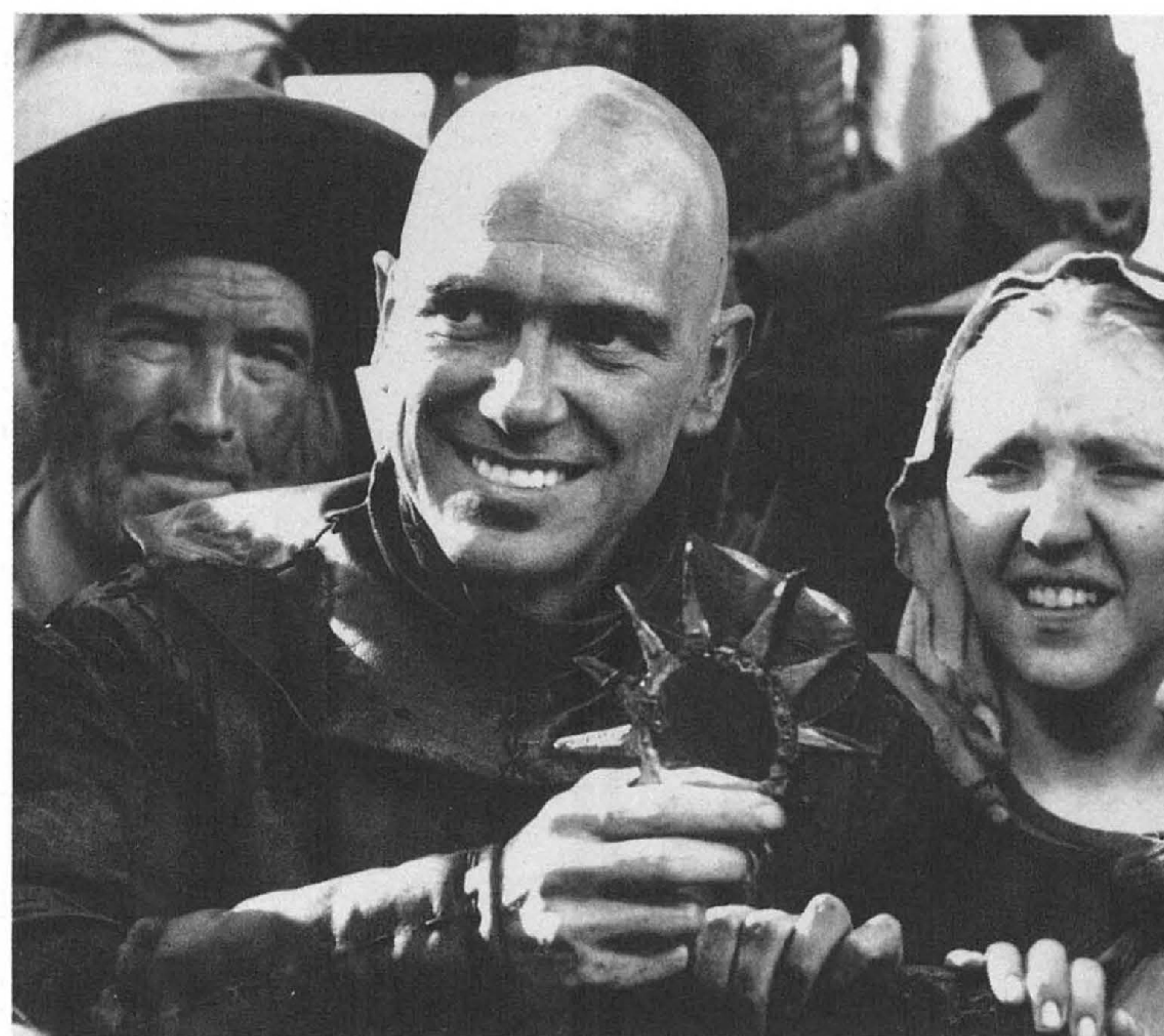
Corinne Michel

Nancy Michel

Pilgrims

9,763 feet

108 minutes



Off the wall: Eugene Bervoets

believe her when she claims to have had visions of the Our Lady. But the priest, won over by the intensity of her belief, suggests she should immure herself in the church walls and become an anchoress, to live side by side with the statue she adores. Despite her family's disapproval, Christine agrees and is walled up in a small dark cell. After several months, she is established within the community as a religious woman; members of the village visit her, speaking to her through a chink in the wall, and asking for her advice and blessing. She is under constant supervision from the priest, but her own fervent visions of the Virgin often conflict with his beliefs.

Christine's mother Pauline – the village herbalist and doctor – has scant respect for the priest, whom she holds directly responsible for her daughter's incarceration. When she delivers the priest's lover of a still-born child, he decides to get even with her. First, he manages to persuade Pauline's dim-witted husband that she "lay" with a goat. Then he whips the villagers into a frenzy, accusing her of being a witch. Pursued by a lynch mob, Pauline hides in a well, but when she falls into the water, the priest refuses to allow anybody to help her, saying that as a sorceress she will surely float; Pauline drowns. Meanwhile, Christine has managed to dig herself out of her cell, and sneaks off with her childhood friend, the drover, to hide in the countryside.

Hearing of her escape, the priest demands she be put back in her hermitage. But the reeve, now married to Christine's younger sister, insists she be executed. Christine, disguised, heads off to town to seek the Bishop's blessing for her return to the outside world. The reeve and the priest, whose rivalry threatens to spill into bloodshed, also visit the Cathedral. While they await an audience, Christine rushes the Bishop's dais and begs to be exempted from her vows. The Bishop is apoplectic with rage, and his men try to recap-

ture the escaped anchoress. Christine manages to escape through a trap door in the floor of the cathedral into the bowels of the earth. She wanders away through a succession of beautiful caves with a rapt expression on her face.

● A low-budget British-Belgian co-production, *Anchoress* at least manages the delicate feat of depicting medieval England without resorting to 'olde worlde' heritage cliché or succumbing to codpiece comedy. Like Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* – by now, surely the touchstone for films set in the Middle Ages – it is shot in austere black and white, with a constant emphasis on rain, wind and mud which lends its landscapes a raw, elemental aspect. Costumes are appropriately grey and rumpled; apparently they were churned around in a cement mixer until they had just the right, crinkled feel. Even the production design verges on the rancid: soured buttermilk was used to give the buildings a suitable air of pale decrepitude.

This is a rigorous little fable, based on true accounts of the so-called Anchoress of Shere, a fourteenth-century carpenter's daughter who had visions of the Virgin Mary while working out in the fields and decided, as contemporary records put it, "to vow herself solemnly to continence and perpetual chastity and to let herself be shut up in a narrow place in the Parish Church."

There wouldn't appear to be much mileage in a film which confines its leading character to a tiny cell, but as Bresson showed in *A Man Escaped*, it is perfectly possible to dramatize solitude. Anyway, writers Christine Watkins and Judith Stanley-Smith have broadened the scope of the story: *Anchoress* may be an introspective meditation on religious faith, but it is also concerned with the dynamics of medieval village life, and in particular with the stranglehold exercised by the twin patriarchal institutions of Church and Manor. Christine's deci-

● England, the fourteenth century. Christine, a young peasant woman, finds herself increasingly drawn to a new statue of the Virgin Mary recently installed in the village church. Along with her younger sister, she gathers apples to lay at the statue's feet, and spends every spare moment worshipping at the Virgin's shrine. The two dominant figures in the village are both interested in her: the priest, a rigorous, self-satisfied theologian, wants her as a mistress, while the reeve, responsible for administering the Manor's affairs, is keen to marry her. One day, while Christine is out in the fields, the reeve proposes, but she turns him down, much to her mother's displeasure.

The villagers frown on Christine's obsession with the Virgin, and don't

sion to immure herself from the world is political as well as spiritual. As the production notes observe, "the celibate anchoress was endowed with considerable status and was judged to be almost as valuable as a man." She was given a smattering of religious education and a right to self-expression. Had she stayed working in the fields, all she could have looked forward to was marriage and child-rearing.

If only in terms of its actors' physiognomies, the film is shrewdly cast. Among the denizens of the village are a mad zealot priest, with pudding-bowl haircut and blazing stare, a dead ringer for the similarly obsessive Antonin Artaud in Dreyer's *Joan of Arc*; a bald-headed reeve who dresses always in black; the Anchoress herself, a beautiful, lustrous-eyed virgin visionary; and various hoarded, craggy-featured peasants who could have stumbled out of a Breughel painting. Striking though these figures are, it's hard to avoid the suspicion *Anchoress* would have worked better as a silent movie, where their faces could have been scrutinized in rapt, leisurely close-up.

Unfortunately, director Chris Newby's eye for images is infinitely sharper than his ear for dialogue. He seems beholden to his cinematographer. Shots are held for too long, and narrative momentum is often lost. If characters speak, it almost seems to violate the stark mood created by the virtuoso camera work. Sound editing is on the eccentric side: whenever it rains, the noise is deafening. The minutest little reverberation is amplified. Given that he has a story to tell, Newby's fondness for poetic symbolism is only fitfully effective. In one misconceived scene, as the angry villagers hunt the anchoress's mother down, believing her to be a witch, the camera focuses for an inordinately long time on a bucket of water balanced precariously on a footbridge. When the villagers cross the bridge, the water ripples and the bucket threatens to topple. What might have seemed an exciting, Tarkovsky-like flourish is so ponderously handled and so self-conscious it merely grates.

Even if its formal elements don't quite coalesce, there is much in the film to savour. Just as the anchoress reacts to the ennui of imprisonment by sewing dramatic embroideries which represent her visions, the film-makers overcome the constrictions placed on them by such an intractable tale by reaching for as many startling images as possible. Whether it be a trapped pigeon fluttering its wings as a motif for Christine's imprisonment; or the scene where she digs herself out of her cell and her fingers sprout from the ground like tiny tendrils; or the ludicrously comic moment where her mother seems about to make love to a goat; or the final sequence, where Christine escapes into a vast, glistening catacomb, the picture remains arresting to look at, however frequently it runs into a narrative cul-de-sac.

Geoffrey Macnab

Blood In Blood Out

USA 1992

Director: Taylor Hackford

Certificate

18

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Hollywood Pictures

In association with

Touchwood Pacific

Partners I

Executive Producers

Jimmy Santiago Baca

Stratton Leopold

Co-executive Producer

Rene Sheridan

Producers

Taylor Hackford

Jerry Gershwin

Associate Producer

Gina Blumenfeld

Production Co-ordinator

Fran R. Creevey

Unit Production Managers

Sharon Mann

Karen Penhale

Location Manager

Laura Sode-Matteson

2nd Unit Director

Gary Davis

Casting

Richard Pagano

Sharon Bialy

Assistant Directors

Josh McLaglen

Sean H. Ferrer

Alex Kramarchuk

Xochi Blymyer

Ted P. Diamandopoulos

Screenplay

Jimmy Santiago Baca

Jeremy Iacone

Floyd Mutrux

Story

Ross Thomas

Directors of Photography

Gabriel Beristain

Additional:

Andy Martinez

Colour

DeLuxe

prints by Technicolor

Steadicam Operator

Jeff Mart

Optical Supervisor

Mark Dornfeld

Editors

Fredric Steinkamp

Karl F. Steinkamp

Additional:

Donn Cambern

Pembroke J. Herring

Production Designer

Bruno Rubeo

Art Director

Marek Dobrowolski

2nd Art Director

Judith Wyle

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Kathleen Walker

Set Decorator

Cecilia Rodarte

On Set Dresser

Shay Cunliffe

Illustrator

Ray Prado

Scenic Artists

Lead:

Beth Elliott

Gordon H. Germain

Stan Trevaskis

Janice Perlin

Special Effects

Co-ordinators

Larry L. Fuentes

Al Di Sarro

Special Effects

Foreman:

Steven Purcell

Music

Bill Conti

Music Performed by

Lead Guitar:

Dennis Budimir

Lead Trumpet:

Rick Baptist

Orchestrations

Jack Eskew

Music Editor

Curt Sobel

Songs

"Como Un Perro"

by Severo Miron,

Blanca Medel Calvez,

performed by Chelo

Silva; "K'in Sventha

Ch'ul Me'tik

Kwadalupe" from

"Mexico: Fiestas of

Chiapas and Oaxaca";

"Low Rider" by Jerry

Goldstein, Lonnie

Jordan, Howard Scott,

Lee Oskar, Harold

Brown, Thomas Allen,

Charles Miller, Morris

Dickerson, "Slippin'

Into Darkness"

by Lonnie Jordan,

Howard Scott, Lee

Oskar, Harold Brown,

Thomas Allen,

Charles Miller, Morris

Dickerson, performed

by WAR; "Jin-Go-Lo-Ba"

by Michael Olatunji,

performed by Santana;

"That Lady" by Ernie

Isley, Marvin Isley,

Ronald Isley, Rudolph

Isley, O'Kelly Isley,

Chris Jasper,

performed by The Isley

Brothers; "Searchin'

For My Love" by Bobby

Moore, performed

by Bobby Moore and

the Rhythm Aces;

"Try Me" by James

Brown, performed

by James Brown;

"Take Me To The River"

by Al Green, Mabon

Hodges, performed

by Al Green; "Little

Wing" by and

performed by Jimi

Hendrix; "Cafe"

by Arcadio Garcia,

Pablo Tellez, Jorge

Santana, performed

by Malo; "597-59"

by Joseph Jarman,

performed by the Art

Ensemble of Chicago;

"Superfreak" by Rick

James, Alonzo Miller,

performed by Rick

James; "Mal Hombre"

by Roger Velasquez

Costume Design

Shay Cunliffe

Associate:

Mayes C. Rubeo

Wardrobe Supervisor

Susie Money

Make-up Artists

Head:

Fred C. Blau

Key:

Felicity Bowring

Mark Bussan

Lesla Nielsen

Margaux L. Lancaster

Tattoo Designer

Freddy Negrete

Title Design

Burke Mattsson

Titles/Opticals

Buena Vista Optical

Supervising Sound Editors

Louis L. Edemann

Paul Timothy Carden

Sound Editors

Kerry Dean Williams

L. Davies

Donald J. Malouf

Gary M. Mundheim

Robert O'Brien

Karen V. Doulac

Gail Clark

Supervising ADR Editors

Larry Singer

Thomas Whiting

ADR Editors

Andrea Horta

Corinne Sessarego

Denise Whiting

Sound Recordists

Edward Tise

ADR:

Mike Boudry

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Richard Portman

Danny Wallin

Anna Behlmer

ADR:

Doc Kane

Foley:

David Gertz

Gary Hecker

Music:

Lee DeCarlo

Foley Artists

James Moriana

Jeffrey Wilhoit

Prison Technical Advisor

Robert Vazquez

Community

Technical Advisor

George Chavez

Consultants

Editorial:

Sheldon Kahn

Day of the Dead:

Consuela G. Flores

Norte

Technical:

Robert B. Taylor

Ronald Noblet

Frederick N. Smith

Robert E. Morrill

Stunt Co-ordinator

Gary Davis

Stunts

Mike Justus

John McCann

Gary Combs

Gill Combs

Rick Edwards

Corey Eubanks

Gary Hymes

Tommy Rosales Jnr

Henri Kingi

Mike Papajohn

Benny Urquidez

Cast

Damian Chapa

Miklo

Jesse Borrego

Cruz

Benjamin Bratt

Paco

Enrique Castillo

Montana

Victor Rivers

Magic Mike

Delroy Lindo

Bonafide

Tom Towles

Red Ryder

Carlos Carrasco

Popeye

Teddy Wilson

Wallace

Raymond Cruz

Chuey

Valente Rodriguez

Frankie

Lanny Flaherty

Big Al

Billy Bob Thornton

Lightning

Geoffrey Rivas

Carlos



The gang's all here

◀ instructions. To avert a war, the governor of San Quentin and Paco, who is now a detective, convince Miklo to make a truce with Bonafide. La Onda bides its time, then, in alliance with the BGA, takes the opportunity on the Day of the Dead to wipe out the AV, doing a double-cross and destroying the BGA at the same time.

On the same day, Cruz's stepmother forgives him for Juanito's death. In San Quentin, La Onda is about to be dispersed across the country. Miklo promises that it will just spread wider and then, with Magic Mike, his new blood brother, he destroys evidence that it was in fact he who ordered Montana's murder. Back in LA, Cruz and Paco are finally reunited beneath a mural of them and Miklo that the artist painted years earlier, in the *barrio*.

Initially, *Blood In Blood Out* does not bode well. A three-hour epic on Los Angeles Chicanos, part-*Godfather*, part-*Riot in Cell Block Eleven*, directed by the maker of *An Officer and a Gentleman* – already it sounds like a poisonous recipe. The opening to Taylor Hackford's film, with its bombastic Spanish guitar and all those breast-hugs, seems to confirm our worst fears. When Miklo arrives at his aunt's doorstep, he's already experienced an attack of the flashbacks, some macho tear-jerking and a brief ecstasy with a backstreet Madonna.

But the film triumphs over cliché to sustain its vast length and space. The key to this success lies in its epic size, a mood and scale more akin to a mini-series than grandiose cinema. In fact cinematographer Gabriel Beristain has shunned the operatic, cinemascope feel of most epic cinema in favour of a rougher televisual style that imperceptibly evolves as the years progress – from the flat static style of the 70s sequences to a brasher fluidity a decade on. The small-screen ambience means that the characters are allowed to build, and the story to develop some fibre beneath its immense body. *Blood In Blood Out* doesn't bear the weight of its three hours, which is a triumph of sorts. Such length also helps the film to slowly envelop its audience. The clichés from the first reel are turned to stunning effect as the three leads evolve into figures very different from our presuppositions. Paco's admission, at the film's close, of guilt for the chain of events culminating in Spider's murder and for everything that followed, redefines his own behaviour – he is a man seeking redemption, not revenge.

But the film still stands as cinema. It borrows the texture and proximity of television, but it also contains an

urgency best pounded out from the big screen. There is the exoticism of East LA Chicano culture, giving us the feel of being quiet intruders into another world. Cruz sprays a graffiti Aztec Goddess onto his low-rider, and Miklo's revenge at the end of the film is intercut *Godfather*-style with the heaving carnival dancing of the Day of the Dead. Throughout, the film's language veers – mostly in mid-sentence – from bastardised English to Spanish, and the small details, from gang-banger's tattoos to a glass of mescal for Juanito's grave, betray an uncomprehended authenticity. Every frame contains a statuette of the maternal Virgin who, in a movie dominated by men, obsessed with *machismo*, is far and away the most substantial female role.

Blood In Blood Out wasn't made for the Anglos, but geared instead to the relatively untapped Latino market in the US. Hackford produced *La Bamba* (the first major studio movie to be made both in Spanish and English, and given separate promotion campaigns), the entire cast and crew were Latino and the script was co-written by poet, author and ex-con Jimmy Santiago Baca. This presumably provides much of the film's other strength – the visceral realism of its prison scenes. Most of it was shot on location in San Quentin, so as well as institutional sodomy, repeated stabbings and a touchdown with Miklo's prosthetic leg, we have ominously large, bald extras. The close-ups of prison food too look authentically awful – almost as repulsive, in fact, as Miklo's lethal blow-job on Big Al.

This is the sort of movie where every twist is accompanied by a booming guitar lick and someone's face scrunching up with emotion. It has lines like, "I don't want his pork chop, I want his life." There's a lot of shouting. But you're reminded of Buñuel's defence after he made his own slice of Latino street life, *Los Olvidados*, and critics condemned brass bedsteads in paupers' homes as a flight of Surrealist fantasy: he'd seen those bedsteads with his own eyes. Much of what initially seems ridiculous about *Blood In Blood Out* gains credibility with time. The film drives forward with a gnawing momentum, and most of the elements that seem overblown and out of place are steadily melted into the fabric.

The film's cod-operatic acting style is a product of culture rather than poor casting, as becomes increasingly apparent. This is also why it may deliver a bit of a shock to Anglo audiences. This is a movie set in America in which English is a second language and white faces are rare and despised. Miklo's white skin is a cross he has to bear, and that's a big reversal for a Hollywood which likes its epics in the mould of *Dances With Wolves*. But *Blood In Blood Out* is fascinating because it works when it shouldn't; because it's a foreign picture of a place we think we know so well; because it's a Third World film, produced in the heart of the First.

Olly Blackburn

Blue

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Derek Jarman

Certificate

15

Distributor

Basilisk Communications

Production Companies

Basilisk Communications/Uplink In association with Channel 4/Arts Council of Great Britain/Opal/BBC Radio 3

Producers

James Mackay Takashi Asai

Associate Producer

David Lewis

Production Co-ordinator

Angela Connealy

Associate Director

David Lewis

Screenplay

Derek Jarman

Colour

Technicolor

Music

Simon Fisher Turner

Music Extracts

"Scheherazade" by Karol Szymanowski, "Glossiennes" by Erik Satie, performed by Jan Latham Koenig

Music Performed by

John Balance Gini Ball Marvin Black Peter Christopherson Markus Dravius Brian Eno Tony Hinnigan Danny Hyde Jan Latham Koenig

Marden Hill

The King of Luxembourg Miranda Sex Garden Momus Vini Reilly Kate St John Simon Fisher Turner Richard Watson Hugh Webb

Additional Music

"Triennale" by and performed by Brian Eno; "Summertime" by Marden Hill and The King of Luxembourg; "Disco Hospital" by and performed by Coil, Danny Hyde; "Fermina" by and performed by Vini Reilly

Titles

G.S.E.

Sound Design

Marvin Black

Sound Recordist

Music:

Markus Dravius Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Paul Hamblin

Voices

John Quentin

Nigel Terry

Derek Jarman

Tilda Swinton

6,840 feet

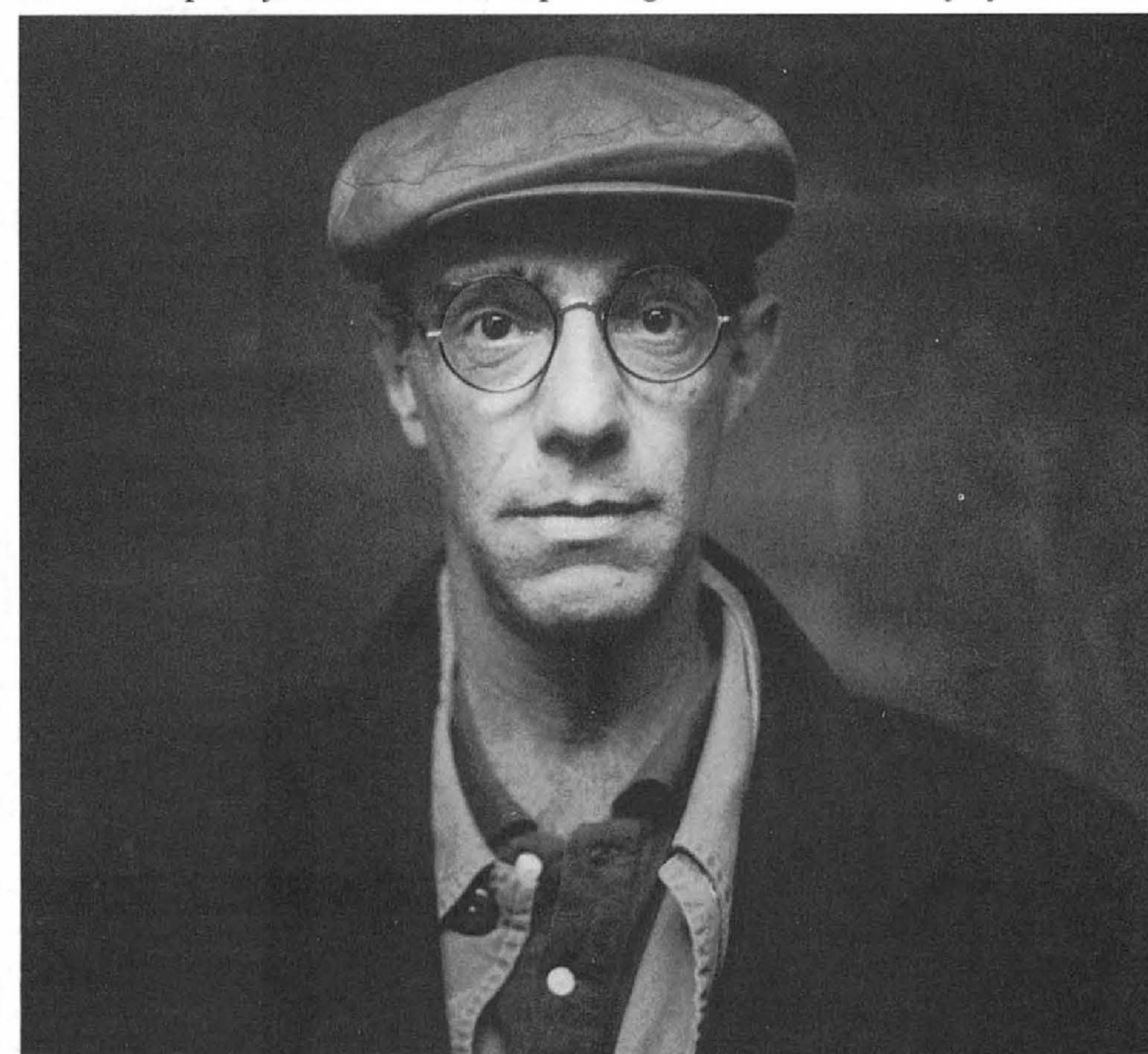
76 minutes

plemented and punctuated by sound effects and music, relate fragmentary details of the director's treatment for symptoms of the HIV virus, the experience of slowly losing his sight, of meeting others undergoing similar treatment, of living with the virus. The voices also mourn the deaths of friends, consider the plight of those caught up in the war in Sarajevo and relate anecdotes of the travels in mythical lands of a character called Blue. Throughout the film the voices meditate on the colour itself, its place in nature and its spiritual qualities as well as bursting into bawdy song.

Blue is, quite simply, blue, and over the duration of Jarman's film the single colour makes of the frame a combination of canvas, mind-screen and eye. *Blue* is the colour of silence, subjectivity and suffering.

To talk of a film that has such a carefully worked and impressionistic soundtrack as 'silent' may seem perverse, but it is a silence that is installed at the level of the image, a strategic silence that Jarman has chosen in response to what he calls "the pandemonium of the image". It is suitably ironic, then, that *Blue* should have been premiered at this year's Venice Biennale where it shared exhibition space with work by Oliviero Toscani, the photographer responsible for the shock-tactic images of the infamous Benetton advertising campaign. Toscani and Benetton, and more specifically the notorious campaign image that depicted a dying HIV patient surrounded by his grieving family are perhaps only the most notorious examples of clamorous 'event-images' that serve ultimately to publicise only themselves, losing sight utterly of the specific realities from which they generate their self-serving controversy.

In the face of such images and their heavily mediated profligacy, *Blue* retains the 'silence' of abstract painting – influenced notably by the mono-



Deep blue Derek

chrome work of the French painter Yves Klein, who himself died an early death at the age of 34. But its silence is one pregnant with the subjective responses of artist and spectators alike. For the form of the work provokes an active viewing which the soundtrack has been designed to elicit – its combination of monologue and prose-poem, sound and music occasionally coalescing to lyrical, almost song-like effect. This property will be most fully accommodated by the simultaneous broadcast of *Blue* on Channel Four and Radio Three, the old Brechtian idea of “separation of the elements” receiving here a novel, multi-media twist. The soundtrack works to spark the spectator's own images off the silent blue canvas; this is a film that takes place as much in the spectator's head as it does onscreen – “an infinite possibility becoming tangible”, as Jarman puts it in one of the monologues.

The asceticism of *Blue* appears to be a refusal of fictional melodrama and the auto-censorship inherent in demands for ‘positive’ images, at the same time as constituting a ‘less-is-more’ *volte face* when confronted with the Benetton imagery. But the film resists being reduced solely to the strategic dimensions of its form. This is because, abstract in conception as it might sound, *Blue* is also a resolutely personal meditation on life with, and on approaching death from, HIV. Incorporating excerpts from the diary Jarman has kept while undergoing therapy at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, the commentaries return repeatedly to his treatment for encroaching blindness. *Blue*, then, is the colour of creeping sightlessness (“the shattering bright light of the eye specialist's camera [that] leaves empty sky-blue after-image... darkness made visible”); the artist's response to the infection's terrifying robbery of his faculties (“If I lose half my sight, will my vision be halved?”); and of suffering borne with remarkable humour (“The Gautama Buddha instructs me to walk away from illness. But he wasn't attached to a drip” – one of several painful punch-lines in the soundtrack's sombre comedy of infection).

The humorous sense of absurdity co-exists with stark anger, particularly directed at government-induced dependency on the work of Aids charities, and tender laments for dead friends. The range of emotional responses emerges as a refusal to be consumed by horror and despair, a defiant gesture of freedom in the teeth of death.

Likewise, *Blue* itself seeks to refuse the already clotted repertoire of images and scenarios resorted to in representing the unrepresentable. For eyes immune to images of agony, *Blue* fulfils the imperative to sometimes turn the gaze away and within, towards an image as ‘silent’ as that proposed here. But it is an image whose richness and beauty nevertheless make it impossible to forget that *Blue* is also the colour of a shroud.

Chris Darke

Careful

Canada 1992

Director: Guy Maddin

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

ICA Projects

Production Company

The Greg and Tracy

Film Ministry Inc

With the participation

of Telefilm Canada/

CIDO

With financial

assistance from

The Canada Council/

The Manitoba

Arts Council

Executive Producer

André Bennett

Producers

Greg Klymkiw

Tracy Traeger

Production Co-ordinator

Sasha Iwanick

Production Manager

Tracy Traeger

Casting

Greg Klymkiw

Co-ordinator:

Shelagh Carter

Assistant Directors

Liz Jarvis

Richard O'Brien-Moran

Screenplay

George Toles

Guy Maddin

Story

George Toles

Director of Photography

Guy Maddin

In colour

Camera Operator

Mike Marshall

Editor

Guy Maddin

Production Designer

Guy Maddin

Art Director

Jeff Solylo

Set Design

Craig Walls

Dean Smallwood

Music

John McCulloch

Costume Design

Donna Szoke

Wardrobe Supervisor

Carolyn Bradshaw

Make-up

Donna Szoke

Pamela Athayde

Titles

Film Opticals

Sound Editor

Guy Maddin

ADR Editor

Russ Dyck

Sound Recordists

Russ Dyck

ADR:

Russ Dyck

Don Melnyk

Sound Re-recorder

Daniel Pellerin

Foley Artist

Andy Malcolm

Animal Trainers

Susan Lisoway

Stewart Hayek

Cast

Kyle McCulloch

Grigorss

Gosia Dobrowolska

Zenaida

Sarah Neville

Klara

Brent Neale

Johann

Paul Cox

Count Knotgers

Victor Cowie

Herr Trotta

Michael O'Sullivan

Blind Ghost

Vince Rimmer

Franz

Katya Gardner

Sigleinde

Jackie Burroughs

Frau Teacher

Ross McMillan

Chief Steward

Leith Clark

Butler Blore

Glen Hubich

Butler Schrammel

Brendan Carruthers

Mortician

George Toles

Countess Knotgers

Greg Klymkiw

Shower Meister

Kelli Shinfield

Gerda the Mountain

Girl

Andrea Wichert

Carol McQuarrie

Barbara Green

Kathryn Martin

Lisa Skrypchako

Soffia Cooney

Dora Sigurdson

Hrond

Daisy

Tina Douvris

Arlea Ashcroft

Jennifer Harris

Rebecca Gibson

Julia Brown

Stacy Shore

Jillian Maddin

Alana Van Buren

Amanda Bourdon

Alexandra Rachev

Tanya Brown

Jessica Brown

Avril Maister

Tracy Gemmell

Ron Eyoifson

Roy Norton

Graham Blicq

Randy Kray

Sean Hanson

Robert Lunn

Peter Lunn

Dan Hewak

Stu Lavitt

Jim Keller

Townspeople

Matt Holm

Conrad Percheson

Hans Ter Horst

Kurt Moritz

Jeff Solylo

Ian Handford

Caelum Vatnsdal

Mark Yuill

Jonas Chernick

Butler Students

9,000 feet

100 minutes

Perched precariously on a steep Alpine slope, the inhabitants of Tolzbad live in constant fear of avalanches which can be triggered by the slightest sound. Johann, a handsome student at the esteemed Tolzbad Butler Gymnasium, becomes engaged to his childhood sweetheart Klara. He joyously breaks the news to his widowed mother, Zenaida, and brother



Alpine fire: Gosia Dobrowolska, Kyle McCulloch

Grigorss, the Gymnasium's star graduate butler that year. Life seems sunny, despite the family's shameful secret: Franz, Zenaida's crippled and mute oldest son, whom she keeps locked in the attic. But that night, Johann has an erotic dream about his mother which grows into an incestuous obsession. Franz is visited by the ghost of his dead father – a swan-feeder blinded in both eyes by two separate freak acts of carelessness – who warns of the tragic consequences of Johann's desires, but Franz has no way of passing on the warning. Johann slips his mother a sleeping draught in a glass of milk and vents his desires as she sleeps, then, in shame, mutilates himself horribly and throws himself off the mountain to his death.

Grigorss now woos Klara, who plans to support herself by working in a mine. But Klara is attracted to her own father, Herr Trotta – who virtually ignores her due to his obsession with her sister, Sigleinde – and snubs Grigorss. Grigorss starts work for the reclusive Count Knotgers at his remote castle, but is warned never to disturb the Count. Ignoring another order never to enter a room where the Count's sick mother lies, he finds her apparently dead. Jealous Klara orders Sigleinde into the river to help her clean the mine dirt from her body, then tries to drown her, but is prevented by the arrival of their father. Summoned by the Count, Grigorss is praised rather than punished. The Count asks after Grigorss' mother, revealing that he knew her in his youth. The ghost reappears to Franz, jealously predicting that Zenaida's old passion for the Count will reignite, leading her to abandon Franz forever.

Zenaida and the Count renew their old affair and, from a distant mountain peak, Grigorss overhears her telling the Count that she rejected Franz because of her loathing for her husband, while in her fantasies Johann and Grigorss were the Count's sons. Klara entices her father to a specially furnished cave hideaway, but he is uninterested and leaves to find Sigleinde. The Count announces his engagement to Zenaida, the horrified

Grigorss responds by challenging him to a duel. Zenaida pleads with Grigorss to save himself by apologising to the Count. He agrees on condition that she goes to Franz and asks his forgiveness, which she does. But Klara tells Grigorss he has betrayed his father's honour, and to secure her love he proceeds with the duel and kills the Count. Zenaida hangs herself in the attic in grief, watched by Franz. In a frenzy over her father's indifference, Klara claims he has molested her and asks Grigorss to kill him. The two lure Herr Trotta to the mountain edge and Grigorss shoots him, causing an avalanche. Klara and her father are swept away in each other's arms, and Grigorss freezes to death accompanied by his mother's ghost.

The press notes for the 1990 *Archangel* (the second of Canadian Guy Maddin's features, both of which are appealing unhinged exercises in black and white melodramatic pastiche) contained a warning that his first colour movie was likely to be “a musical in the style of East Indian operettas”. Instead, it's *Careful* – which turns out to be anything but. On the whole, though, it is more audience-friendly than *Archangel*, in which a dying man strangles a Bolshevik by yanking out his own intestines.

Like Maddin's 1988 *Tales from the Gimli Hospital* (set in a smallpox hospital in what appeared to be Iceland), *Careful* plunders elements of oral folk-tale, horror and myth and reshuffles them in a crazed cod-ethnic, cod-historical setting: a luridly reimagined Bavaria which bears the same fantastical relation to Teutonically-inspired movie history as the *mise en scène* of *Delicatessen* did to occupied France and the Resistance – at once instantly recognisable and like nowhere on earth. Like *Archangel* (structured around the comic-cruel notion of a love triangle of Great War victims with severe memory disorders), its theme (of sorts) is thwarted and irrational desire.

The absurdity of the protagonists' predicaments and codes of honour is cranked up by two favourite Maddin devices: florid silent-movie-style ►

◀ captions, and a bizarre third-person storyteller/narrator. "Careful, Arthur – don't spill it," an anonymous voice-over warns during the film's monochrome sepia opening image of a small boy struggling with a steaming cauldron (echoed hilariously in the parodic mad-scientist scene where Johann concocts a sleeping draught for his mother).

"Think twice," continues the voice, cautioning Tolzbad's children against unrestrained play. "I'm sure you can live without that." The irony is, of course, that such calls for restraint are intrinsically impotent – hence the story we are told of Johann and Grigorss' swan-feeder father who, having been blinded in one eye by his mother's brooch pin as a baby, loses the other when a cuckoo-clock bird springs out at him as an adult, and who finally dies in an avalanche. As the voice-over intones, "Caution is not enough for the blind."

Imagine the visual ingeniousness of a bargain-bin no-tech Jeunet and Caro, from Grigorss' frowningly serious displays of baroque napkin-folding to the 18-inch-tall Black Forest gateau which a cat has to be shoed off at the Count's castle. Combin it with the surreal sensibility of a funnier, younger David Lynch and the *sincerely* wooden acting of an Edward D.Wood golden turkey (honed to perfection by a cast of regulars, here joined by director Paul Cox and Jackie Burroughs, director/star of *A Winter Tan*), and you'll have some measure of *Careful's* weird, inspired inventiveness. In a film which can afford real animals but not real mountains, a couple of goats running up a slope – swathed in dry ice, shot in purple or blue monochrome and captioned to tell us the altitude – stand in for the Alps.

Elsewhere, Tolzbad's kitsch hell of giant flugelhorn, flaxen-haired maidens and flower-bedecked funiculars takes on the camp colours of Pierre & Gilles' Britvic poster; chubby-faced Cary Elwes lookalike Johann's maternal object of desire slumbers on a sky-blue bed scattered with yellow roses. *Careful's* tangle of futile – and mostly incestuous – desires are rich in kinky farce, all the better for being played po-faced. But the film's most deliciously perverse moments originate in the Butler Gymnasium, where the strapping post-pubescent pupils are crammed into an absurd uniform of peaked caps, bell-boy jackets and shorts, and trained in strict servility by the menacingly Germanic (and terrifyingly rouged) Burroughs. There's even a gratuitous communal shower scene.

When Grigorss enters the forbidden room in the Count's castle, he finds not horror but *Careful's* joke against its own artifice. Wax dripping from Grigorss' candelabra causes the Count's mother's chalk-white make-up to crack and, in keeping with the good-humoured rawness of the film itself, he spends considerable time carrying out repairs which would normally be done behind the scenes.

Claire Monk

Como agua para chocolate (Like Water for Chocolate)

Mexico 1991

Director: Alfonso Arau

Certificate

15

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Company

Arau Films
International
In association with
Cinevista Inc/
Aviaca/National
Council for Cinema
and the Arts/
Mexican Institute
of Cinema/
National Tourist
Development Fund/
Government
of the State of
Coahuila/Cinema
Development Fund

Producer

Alfonso Arau

Production Co-ordinators

Jenny Ayala
Piedras Negras:
Eduardo Barrientos
Production Managers
Oscar Castillo
Emilia Arau
Location Manager
Alfonso Granados
Post-production
Co-ordinator
New York:
Robert Warmflash

Casting

Claudia Becker
Felipe Fernandez
Juan C. Alatorre
Assistant Directors
Manuel Hinojosa
Oscar Guarín
Mariana Sanchez
Maureen Jimenez

Screenplay

Laura Esquivel
Based on the novel
by Laura Esquivel
Director of Photography
Emmanuel Lubezki
Steve Bernstein
In colour

Camera Operator

2nd Unit:
Claudio Rocha
Optical Effects
Manuel Sainz
Francisco Rodriguez

Graphic Design

Sanabta Gomez
Ignacio Borja

Editors

Carlos Bolado
Francisco Chiu
Art Directors
Marco Antonio Arteaga
Mauricio De Aguinaco
Denise Pizzini

Set Design

Emilio Mendoza
Ricardo Mendoza
Gonzalo Ceja
Special Effects Supervisor
Raul Falomir

Music

Leo Brower
Music Producer
Gabriel Romo

Songs

"Mi Querido Capitan"
by José Alfonso
Palacios; "Jesuita en
Chihuahua" by Richard
Tolentino; "Estrillita"
by Manuel M. Ponce;
"Estrillita Marinera"
by Alfonso Esparza
Oteo, "Paso Del Norte"
by Felipe Valdos Loal,
"Mi Carro Ford"
by René Vazquez
performed by
Los Morales

Choreography

Farnesio De Bernal

Costume Design

Carlos Brown

Wardrobe Supervisor

Pedro R. Flores

Make-up

Supervisor:
Julian Tejeda
Artists:
Robert Billafuerte
Sergio Espinoza

Titles/Opticals

Cynosure

Sound Editor

Aurelio Lopez

Sound Recordists

Marcos Welch
Juan C. Prieto
2nd Unit:
Juan Castro
New York:
Bill Markle

Dubbing Supervisor

Liza Willer

Dubbing Engineer

Carlos Salgado

Sound Re-recordists

Felipe Zavala
Alejandro Baez
Ricardo Saldivar
Elias Martel
Juan M. Belmont
Enoc Martinez
Moises Trujillo

Magic Consultant

Mago Nino

Stunt Co-ordinator

Javier Lambert

Stunts

Mauricio Martinez
Wilebaldo Bucio

Cast

Marco Leonardi
Pedro
Lumi Cavazos
Tita
Regina Torne
Mama Elena
Mario Ivan Martinez
John Brown
Ada Carrasco
Nacha
Yareli Arizmendi
Rosaura
Claudette Maille
Gertrudis
Pilar Aranda
Chencha
Farnesio De Bernal
Priest
Joaquin Garrido
Sergeant Trevino
Rodolfo Arias
Juan Alejandro
Margarita Isabel
Paquita Lobo
Sandra Arau
Esperanza
Andres Garcia Jnr
Alex
Regino Herrera
Nicolas
Genaro Aguirre

Rosalio
David Ostrosky
Juan de la Garza
Brigida Alexander
Aunt Mary
Amado Ramirez
Pedro's Father
Arcelia Ramirez
Great Niece (Narrator)
Socorro Rodriguez
Paquita's Friend
Rafael Garcia Zuazua
Godfather
Rafael Garcia Zuazua Jnr
Young Alex
Eduardo Ballesteros
Young Tita
Melisa Mares
Young Rosaura
Gabriela Canudas
Adolescent Rosaura
Natalia De La Fuente
Young Gertrude
Beatriz Elias
Adolescent Gertrude
Rodolfo Mejia
Venerable Master
Ricardo Mendoza
First Vigilante
Jaime R. Rodriguez
Oswaldo Martinez
Javier Mares
Miguel Mares
Jorge Vizales
Masons
Orquesta De R. Lombra
Musicians
Artemio Cruz
Juan Alejandro's
Assistant
Simon
Pulque
Chester
Tequila

Melisa Nickliff
Mary Beth Awyer
David McKinney
Ryan Manti
Bo Hatch
Alfredo P. De Tejada
Gabriela P. De Tejada
Stacey Ashabrunner
Teresa Ross
Susana Garcia C.
Billy Jagnes
K. Wickliff
Fune Kohlman
Guests at John
Brown's House
Hayde J. Rodriguez
Maria H. Pineda
Estela Lopez R.
Lorena Villarreal
Indira Sanchez
Sonia Ruiz
Maria R. Flores
Lizet Martinez
Soldiers
Victor M. Gomez
Jose F. Lopez
Javier Gutierrez
Roberto Diaz
Juan A. Ramos
Jaime J. Martinez
Government Troops
Teodoro Bastida
Jesus Aguilar
Max Geturino
Angel Sierra
Francisco Romero
Luis A. Muñoz
Jose M. Garcia
Mario Vasquez
Jose A. Hernandez
Rogelio Cornejo
Juan Murillo
Revolutionaries

10,237 feet

114 minutes

Subtitles

● Mexico, 1895. Born, literally, in a flood of tears on the kitchen table, Tita is condemned by family tradition never to marry. As the youngest daughter of the family, she must rather care for her mother. Tita becomes bound to the kitchen, where she learns the secrets of traditional culinary arts from the servants. However, she falls in love with Pedro, a young neighbour who asks for her hand. Elena, Tita's mother, refuses and offers him her eldest daughter Rosaura instead. He accepts so that he can be near Tita.

Food now becomes a weapon in Tita's hands. Forced to make the cake for her sister's wedding, she cries into the mixture: those who eat it cry uncontrollably and are then seized by nausea. A year later she makes Quails in Rose Petal Sauce: everyone at the table is seized by sexual desire and Gertrudis, Tita's other sister, is carried off naked to join the Revolution by a soldier attracted from the heat of a battle nearby by the scent of roses.

Aware of the electricity between Tita and Pedro, Elena sends him, Rosaura and their newly born son off over the border to live with a relative in Texas. On hearing of the death of her baby nephew soon afterwards, Tita suffers a breakdown and the local doctor, John Brown, insists on removing her from the household so that he can look after her. In gratitude, Tita agrees to marry him.

Meanwhile the ranch is attacked by bandits and Elena is killed. Tita and Dr. Brown return and are joined by the rest of the family. Rosaura gives birth prematurely to a baby daughter and

asks Tita if she can be named after her, since she too will be condemned to a similar fate in the name of family tradition. Tita refuses and the baby is named Esperanza (Hope). Tita also discovers the reason for her mother's bitterness: a love affair which produced Gertrudis.

Pedro and Tita consummate their long-standing passion and Gertrudis returns, now a general of the Revolution. Tita stands up to the ghost of her mother that has been tyrannising her. Elena now disappears for good and Rosaura dies from chronic indigestion: Esperanza is free. Dr. Brown, aware of the situation, tells Tita that he only wants her happiness and that she does not have to marry him.

Years later, Esperanza weds Alex, John's son from a previous marriage. Finally alone, Tita and Pedro make love and Pedro dies in ecstasy. Tita decides to follow him and eats matches. The flames of desire envelop the couple and burn down the ranch: Pedro and Tita are united for eternity. All that Esperanza finds when she returns from her honeymoon is Tita's book of recipes.

● *Like Water for Chocolate* has repeated the success of Laura Esquivel's novel of the same name in both Mexico and the United States. This is quite appropriate for a film whose action takes place at the border between both countries. It is also the most financially successful of the films associated with the much heralded renaissance in Mexican cinema that has emerged with a new generation of film-makers, independent producers and, perhaps most importantly here – because the director, Alfonso Arau, is not himself part of this generation – a middle-class public interested in local film production.

The main action of the film takes place during the Mexican Revolution and tells the story of a woman's struggle for affective freedom against authoritarian maternal law and tradition. And this is what marks the film off from the majority of films of the Mexican Revolution and the Westerns that constitute their US counterpart. *Like Water for Chocolate* retreats from the masculinized terrains of high politics and the battlefield and concentrates our attention on the so-called private sphere of a household run by women (the men are either dead, like Tita's father, or mere objects of desire, like Pedro himself). It presents itself, apparently at least, as a 'woman's film'.

The most important place in this home is the kitchen, where Tita is born and learns her culinary skills (and weaponry), and which in the context of violent change represents an important site of continuity. Indeed, from the point of view of the Mexican Tourist Board and the National Council for Cinema and the Arts that partially financed the film, the practice of cooking that takes place there probably constitutes a 'national tradition' worth promoting – especially since the relation to food is deprived of all danger-

ous connotations of excess. The film is told in flashback by the daughter who still possesses Tita's recipe book – and which, no doubt, she will pass on to her own daughter as a safe sign of female solidarity and past rebellion.

Like Water for Chocolate is not an example of Latin American 'third' or 'imperfect' cinema. Rather, it forms part of that international series of films about food fetishism associated most recently with *Babette's Feast*, *Tamopo* and *La Grande Bouffe*. Even here, however, it lacks the dangerous obsessiveness of these: instead of bringing politics and sex together via food, so as to subject them to visual analysis, Arau's images religiously separate them out and purify each of these activities from mutual contamination. Tita's passionate sister Gertrudis ignites only to leave the household, join the Revolution and return with a husband; whilst Tita herself is born in a flood of tears in a kitchen stinking of onion, only to die in her lover's arms in a barn converted into an altar. The cleanliness of the images, enhanced by good production values, thus serves its function here by domesticating fetishism.

A counter-Western in the form of a family romance, *Like Water for Chocolate* also functions quite explicitly as a national allegory, and it is the place that it accords women here that probably explains its success. There is, however, another reason: the sentimentalized relation between Tita and the female servants Nacha and Chenchacha (their names clear signs of social class in Mexico). What is so disturbing about this aspect of the film is that its representation of domestic servitude echoes the classical pre-war Hollywood racism of films such as *Gone With the Wind*.

Despite the violent struggles for power going on both in and outside the household, the servants' own loyalties remain remarkably stable. Moreover, it is they who provide Tita with her culinary skills, their recipes which fill her recipe book. In exchange they come to embody a now tamed tradition and provide the new family emerging from the revolution with its cultural roots, its links to a mythic past connoted by food. What is so interesting about this film is that it registers this history without, however, acknowledging it.

Like Water for Chocolate is a 'feel-good' melodrama. The fact that the film refuses to reflect on its own social contents may seem remarkable, but is in fact merely a reflection of real social relations in contemporary Mexico itself – and their relative lack of discussion. From this point of view the film acts as a kind of palliative for the middle-class audiences with which it has been so successful. Despite all the changes brought about in Mexican society by the Revolution and its aftermath, they can still feel comfortable with those things that have remained the same: the servants in their kitchens.

John Kraniauskas

The Crush

USA 1993

Director: Alan Shapiro

Certificate

15

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Morgan Creek

Executive Producer

Gary Barber

Producer

James G. Robinson

Line Producer

Michael MacDonald

Associate Producers

Marci Lirofi

Joel Segal

Production Controller

Todd P. Smith

Production Co-ordinators

Vancouver:

Susan Kavesh

LA:

Louise Rosner

Production Manager

Michael MacDonald

Unit Production Manager

Michael MacDonald

Location Manager

Dean Stoker

Post-production

Supervisor

Jody Levin

Casting

Vancouver:

Michelle Allen

Assistant Directors

Joel Segal

Bill Bannerman

John Lind

Screenplay

Alan Shapiro

Director of Photography

Bruce Surtees

Colour

Alpha Cine

Technicolor

Camera Operator

Cyrus Block

Editor

Ian Crafford

Associate Editor

Neil Eric Wenger

Production Designer

Michael Bolton

Art Director

Eric Fraser

Set Decorator

Paul Joyal

Set Dressers

Steve Houle

Neil Turkington

Tom Bonny

James Purvis

Brian Kane

Scenic Artist

Ricardo Spinace

Music

Graeme Revell

Orchestrations

Tim Simonec

Music Editor

Jim Harrison

Songs

"Hard to Get"

performed by Starclub;

"My House" performed

by Chris Kowanko;

"Taste" performed

by Auto & Cherokee;

"So Good" performed

by Miracle Legion;

"I Want You Back"

performed by

Cry Charity

Costume Design

Sharon Purdy

Make-up Artist

Rosalina Da Silva

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editor

Michael Hilkene

Sound Editors

Robert Heffernan

Jeremy J. Gordon

Raoul

Mark Rathaus

Jeff Rosen

Wolf Schmidt

John O. Wilde

ADR Supervisor

Joseph A. Mayer

ADR Editors

Robert Fitzgerald

Chris Jargo

Sound Recordists

Michael T. Williamson

ADR Recordist

Christina Tucker

Foley Recordist

Troy Porter

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Paul Massey

Adam Jenkins

Don Digirolamo

Foley Artists

Joan Rowe

Catherine A. Harper

Stunt Co-ordinator

Betty Thomas

Stunts

Brent Woolsey

Melissa Stubbs

Godfrey Knox

Fiona Roeske

John Scott

Dawn Stofer-Rupp

Cast

Cary Elwes

Nick Eliot

Alicia Silverstone

Darian Forrester

Jennifer Rubin

Amy

Amber Benson

Cheyenne

Kurtwood Smith

Cliff Forrester

Gwyneth Walsh

Liv Forrester

Matthew Walker

Michael

Deborah Hancock

Samantha

Beverley Elliott

Tex Murphy

Andrew Airlie

Dr Pollard

Sheila Paterson

Mrs Tinkerman

Brent Chapman

Steven Tinkerman

James Kidnie

Attorney

Betty Phillips

Abigail Spaulding

Duncan Fraser

Detective

Paul Bittante

Police Officer

Doug Abrahams

Hospital Room Cop

Mark Acheson

Locksmith

Deryl Hayes

Reporter

Lesley Ewen

Photo Editor

Jennifer Clement

Art Director

8,004 feet

89 minutes

Nick Eliot finds himself the unwanted object of the amorous attentions of Darian – the precocious 14-year-old daughter of his new landlords, Liv and Cliff Forrester, whose back garden cottage he rents upon taking up a new job as staff writer for the glossy magazine *Pique*. At a party hosted by the Forresters, Nick finds himself lured by Darian to a beauty spot favoured by courting couples, and in an unguarded moment kisses her. Amy, a *Pique* photographer who befriends Nick, warns him that the girl has a crush on him.

Darian's incursions into Nick's privacy become ever bolder. When a photograph of himself as a child with his father disappears, Nick suspects Darian. Disturbed in her room while searching the supposedly empty house, Nick hides in a cupboard with louvred doors; but Darian, suspecting his presence, strips provocatively. Attempting to flee the house, Nick is stopped by Cliff, who demands he accompany him to the attic, suspicious of his presence in the house. He warns him against showing any sexual interest in his daughter, and shows him the fairground roundabout he bought for Darian but which she has long since outgrown. Unveiling his newly resprayed Valiant to Amy, Nick is shocked to discover an obscenity scratched across the bonnet. Attempts to discuss the matter with Cliff and Liv fail before Darian's feigned innocence.

After Darian's girlfriend Cheyenne attempts to warn Nick about Darian, she meets with an 'accident' at riding school. At a crucial editorial meeting, Nick is horrified to discover his computer disc blank; returning home he discovers the computer wiped. A search reveals a hidden cellar housing an altar Darian has built to him. Frantically Nick attempts to rewrite his piece. After Darian observes Amy in bed with Nick, an 'accident' involving a wasps' nest is arranged for Amy in her darkroom. Nick's attempts to find alternative lodgings are thwarted, and he finds himself under arrest for the sexual attack of a minor. Acquittal seems impossible when physical evidence is adduced linking him to Darian. His editor arranges bail but sacks him. Returning to the house to pack, he is visited by Cheyenne who tells him of Darian's diary – evidence enough to clear him. Searching the deserted house, Nick enters the attic, where he discovers Cheyenne bound to the roundabout. Darian accuses him of having sex with Cheyenne when he attempts to release her. Cliff arrives and attacks him. Outraged, Darian makes for her father, violently attacking him. Nick recovers sufficiently to level a punch at her. Later, confined to a prison hospital, Darian begins to form a strong attachment to her psychiatrist.

Alan Shapiro, whose first feature this is, is a better director than he is a screenwriter, and *The Crush* is better directed and photographed – by Clint Eastwood's director of photogra-

pher Bruce Surtees – than its mechanical script deserves. Arguably the American teenager is a horror film waiting to happen, and *The Crush* hardly needs Darian's array of lethal props – the wasps' nest, the riding tackle that invites interference, the fairground roundabout – to make its point. It is surely the thoughtless recycling of generic material that leads to Darian being presented as not only sexually but also intellectually precocious. Only on the other side of the Atlantic could acquaintance with the life-cycle of the wasp invite awed accusations of "knowing stuff", or competence at the piano and a position two grades above one's age group present sufficient cause for emotional trauma. Intellectual vacuity would surely have increased the character's fearsomeness.

Improbabilities abound. The altar with its burning candles could surely not have escaped notice for long? And the louvred wardrobe in Darian's room is an all-too-familiar place of concealment. Comparison cannot but be made with *Play Misty For Me* (also photographed by Surtees), likewise a film about female obsession explored from the male victim's viewpoint. *Play Misty For Me* derived its shock value from glimpses of the desperation informing its female protagonist's actions. Against Jessica Walter's playing in that film, Alicia Silverstone's interpretation of Darian cannot but appear superficial. She plays Darian as a deliberate cross between a young Ann-Margret and Sue Lyons' Lolita (Shapiro's references to the film of Nabokov's novel are many but not varied, stopping emblematically at glasses and bikini). Darian becomes less a maelstrom of out-of-kilter desire than merely the engine cranking up narrative devices. She is also over-explained through the existence of her vacuously social-climbing parents and in particular her sexually possessive father.

Somewhere along the line, thanks to Surtees' atmospheric cinematography, a point is made about the tensions between the familiar and ramshackle (the guest house in the garden, the tour of Vancouver architectural vernacular), and the new, stripped-out and glossy world (the office, Amy's apartment, the museum of Indian culture). A point is also made about the opportunity for reinvention of the self offered by a change of location and employment. Cary Elwes gains stubble and horn-rimmed spectacles through the edited title sequence journey to Vancouver and his search for lodgings, recreating himself as a fall guy likeable enough, if cut to a somewhat over-familiar pattern of chinos, Brooks Brothers and Timberlands. Some faint humour is also wrung from the journalistic milieu. That Darian's rewrite of Nick's story gains plaudits confirms suspicions that glossies with titles like *Pique* could only be written by 14-year-olds. Despite narrative predictabilities and the sense of missed opportunity, *The Crush* staves off dullness with well-shot, fresh locations and amiable casting.

Verina Glaessner

Dirty Weekend

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Michael Winner

Certificate
18

Distributor
UIP

Production Company
Scimitar Films

Executive Producer
Jim Beach

Producers
Michael Winner
Robert Earl

Associate Producer
Ron Purdie

Production Co-ordinator
Margaret Adams

Location Manager
Charles Hubbard

Assistant Directors
Ron Purdie
Patrick Kinney

Screenplay
Michael Winner
Helen Zahavi
Based on the novel
by Helen Zahavi

Director of Photography
Alan Jones
In colour

Camera Operators
Gerry Anstiss
Roy Ford

Editor
Arnold Crust

Executive Editor
Chris Barnes

Production Designer
Crispian Sallis

Music
David Fanshawe

Music Editor
Robin Clarke

Music Consultant
Clive Farrell

Songs
"Beautiful Dreamer"
by Stephen D. Foster,
performed by Carol
Decker; "Wish I Was
Here" by Aston/Smith,
performed by Jay
Aston; "Summer Song"
by R. Goby,
L. Carrington-Windo,
performed by
Bedazzled; "Burst"
by R. Farr, A. Lewis,
performed by
The Darling Buds;
"Trouble" by
M. Burrowes,
performed by Forget
Me Nots; "Motorcycle
Emptiness" by
J. Bradfield,
R. Edwards, N. Jones,
S. Moore, performed
by The Manic Street
Preachers; "Window
Pane" by C. Griffiths,
T. Griffiths, performed
by Real People;
"Drifting" by Alan
Tyler, performed
by The Rockingbirds;
"Hold It Down" by
M. Myers, M. Nicholls,
B. Harding, C. Browne,
performed by Senseless
Things; "Another Girl
Another Planet" by
P.A. Perrett, performed
by The Only Ones;
"You Spin Me Round
(Like A Record)" by
P. Burns, M. Percy,
S. Coy, T. Lever,
performed by Dead
Or Alive; "Broken
Rock" by M. Jones,
I. Fletcher, "River of
Love" by M. Jones,
performed by Slow
Bongo Floyd;
"Everybody's Free"
by Cox, Swanston Band
of Gypsies, performed
by Rozalla

Wardrobe Supervisor
Sue Wain

Make-up
Alan Boyle
Christine Allsop

Sound Editors
Roy Baker
Bill Trent

Sound Recordists
David Brill
Music:
Mike Ross-Trevor
Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist
Gerry Humphreys

Ethnic Field Recordings
David Fanshawe

Mountain Earth Harp
Colin Offord's Great
Bowling Company

Stunts
Tip Tipping

Cast
Lia Williams
Bella
Rufus Sewell
Tim
Michael Cule
Norman
David McCallum
Reggie
Christopher Ryan
Small Victim
Sean Pertwee
Quiet Victim
Nicholas Hewetson
Bitter Victim
Christopher Adamson
Serial Killer
Jack Galloway
David
Matthew Marsh
Bascombe
Ian Richardson
Nimrod
Shaughan Seymour
Charles
Mark Burns
Mr Brown
David Schaal
Stan
Matthew Long
Gunshop Assistant
Norman Mitchell
Repairman
R.J. Bell
Man In Train
Andrew Neil
Newsreader
Neil Norman
Party Man
Miriam Kelly
Marion
Sylvia Syms
Mrs Crosby
Lorraine Doyle
Secretary
Simone Hyams
Party Girl
Ruby Milton
Mary

9.246 feet
103 minutes

Spurned by her two-timing teacher lover, Bella decides to leave London for Brighton. She moves into a basement flat and starts taking in secretarial work. While at her desk, she notices a man observing her from the building opposite. The next day, she sees him again. Then she starts getting abusive calls.

A friend arranges a blind date with a policeman, but he proves to be as lewd and threatening as the Peeping Tom. Later, while Bella is sitting on a bench, the peeper approaches her and threatens her with a future physical attack. She visits an Iranian clairvoyant, who offers her a knife and the knowledge that she can either be a butcher or a lamb. This gives her the confidence to taunt the peeper, which leads to dire threats.

Bella decides to get the peeper first, breaking into his flat, beating him to death with a hammer and stealing a roll of £20 notes in the process. This sudden empowerment creates a desire for a gun. Turned away from a gun shop for lacking a licence, she is approached by a man who offers her a 'piece' and six bullets for £400.

On Saturday night Bella goes out to find a man. At a hotel bar she meets Norman, an obese academic, and agrees to go to his room where she feels an unaccountable twinge of desire. However, Norman fails to achieve an erection and Bella can't resist mocking him, so he hits her with his shoe. In pretend remorse, she agrees to a bondage session but ends it by asphyxiating him. Troubled by toothache, Bella spends Sunday morning trying to find a dentist. Reggie proves to be a sadist, using only the most painful methods. Afterwards he offers her a lift home in his Mercedes, drives her instead to an underground car park, and forces her to fellate him. Bella runs him over, and repeatedly drives over his body.

Having decided to flee Brighton, Bella comes across three yuppie louts about to set fire to a bag lady. As they stalk Bella, she shoots them dead one by one. Disposing of the car and the gun, Bella wanders the sea front, while waiting for the first train, but is seized by a serial killer who almost chokes

her. However, she recovers enough to repeatedly stab him until he falls off the West Pier and into the sea. Bella is last seen accepting a light from a strange man on a train.

Michael Winner is an *auteur* in the sense that he can shrink almost any subject to his Sunday-tabloid world view – even, it would seem, a hype-inflated novel of feminist revenge. Where once Winner could claim some credit as a maker of efficient, if morally dubious, thrillers, nowadays all his films seem to aspire to seaside postcard farce, in which ordinary society is represented almost exclusively by bright and brittle young women and leering, well-off, middle-aged men. In that sense there's little difference in tone between *Dirty Weekend* and Winner's 1988 adaptation of Alan Ayckbourn's stage play *A Chorus of Disapproval*. Only in Winnerland can red-nosed rhubarbing and bloody mayhem seem identical.

There's a sad irony about a feminist *bête noire* like Winner adapting a novel so highly praised by feminist pundits. The seeds of this execrable film, with its nagging Bella-does-this-but-she-won't-do-that narration, and its prurient coyness about sex, are all there in Helen Zahavi's dismal novel. It's arguable that the book deserves an adaptor like Winner. The tendency among critics to find redeeming features in seemingly irredeemable films – with female revenge movies like *I Spit On Your Grave* currently being reappraised – can hardly apply here. There are no generic codes at work in *Dirty Weekend* for any subtext to subvert. The film is *uniquely* awful.

Winner also has a reputation for extreme professional slickness, in that he prides himself on packing the maximum number of set-ups into each shooting day. Here the ill effects of this crank-and-print method are clear to see: shots are flatly lit and ill-framed, performances are end-of-the-pier (with the exception of Lia Williams, who works hard at a seemingly impalpable role). It's not so much a low-budget aesthetic as an anti-aesthetic ethos and it's sheer murder to watch.

Nick James



Being bashful: Lia Williams

The Firm

USA 1993

Director: Sydney Pollack

Certificate
15

Distributor
UIP

Production Company
Paramount Pictures

Executive Producers
Michael Hausman
Lindsay Doran

Producers
Sydney Pollack
Scott Rudin
John Davis

Production Co-ordinator
Nanette Siegert

Unit Manager
Scott Ferguson

Unit Production Manager
Michael Hausman

Location Managers
Michael Dellheim
Grand Cayman Islands:
Daniel Strol
Randolph Ostrow
Washington:
Peggy Pridemore
Boston:
Michael Dick
Eric Davidson

Location Co-ordinator
Alonzo Woods

Post-production Supervisor
Karen Marmer

Casting
David Rubin
Associate:
Debra Zane
Voice:
Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors
David McGiffert
Carla Corwin
Scott Harris

Screenplay
David Rabe
Robert Towne
David Rayfiel
Based on the book
by John Grisham

Director of Photography
John Seale
In colour
prints by
DeLuxe

Underwater Photography
Pete Romano

Camera Operator
Mark Van Loon

Steadicam Operator
Mark Van Loon

Computer Graphics
John Monsour

Editors
William Steinkamp
Fredric Steinkamp

Production Designer
Richard Macdonald

Art Department Co-ordinators
Yael Haffner
Grand Cayman Islands:
Ann Cockerton

Art Director
John Willett

Set Decorator
Casey Hallenbeck

Set Dressers
Lisa Miller
David Weathers
Joseph McAfee Jnr
Spencer Register

Special Effects
Ken Estes
Additional:
Steve Wolf

Music
Dave Grusin

Music Extracts
"Oboe Concerto in
D Minor – Adagio" by
A. Marcello, performed
by Philharmonia
Orchestra

Music Performed by
Dave Grusin

Music Editor
Ted Whitfield

Music Consultant
Boston:
Joel Sill

Songs
"Start It Up" by Robben
Ford, performed by
Robben Ford & The
Blue Line; "Members
Only" by Larry
Addison, performed
by Ruby Wilson;
"The Firm Shuffle",
"Another Cup of
Coffee", "Sweet
Memphis" by Lannie
McMillan, Scott Reed,
Richard Cesani,
Gregory McIntyre,
performed by The
Lannie McMillan
Quartet; "Save the
Best For Last" by
Wendy Waldman,
Jon Lind, Phill
Galdston, performed
by Clair Marlo
Orchestra; "Maple
Drive" by and
performed by Jack
Allocco; "Don't Put
No Headstone On My
Grave" by and
performed by Charlie
Rich; "Out of the Blue",
"Down De Road"
by and performed
by Andy Narell;
"Money, Money,
Money" by George
Nowak, performed
by George Nowak,
Henry Leslie, Mark
McTaggard, Harry
Johnston; "Stormy
Monday" by and
performed by T-Bone
Walker; "M-O-N-E-Y"
by and performed by
Lyle Lovett; "I Sho Do"
by Mabon Hodges, Billy
Always, performed by
Ollie Nightingale;
"Guitar Blues" by and
performed by Little
Jimmy King; "Dance
Class" by Andy Narell,
performed by Dave
Samuels; "Blame It
On The Rum" by and
performed by James
White; "Stars On
The Water" by Rodney
Crowell, performed
by Jimmy Buffett;
"Never Mind"
by Harlan Howard,
performed by
Nanci Griffith

Costume Design
Ruth Myers

Costume Supervisor
Bruce Ericksen

Make-up Supervisor:
Ben Nye Jnr
Richard Dean

Title Design
Phill Norman

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editor
J. Paul Huntsman

Dialogue Editors
Matthew Sawelson
Adam Sawelson
Gary Lewis
David Beadle

Supervising ADR Editor
Jessica Gallavan

ADR Editor
J. Christopher Jargo

Foley Editors
Lucy Coldsnow-Smith
Jeff Rosen
Jonathan Klein

Sound Recordists

David MacMillan

Music:

Don Murray

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Chris Jenkins

Mark Smith

Doug Hemphill

Sound Effects Editors

John Haeny

Myron Nettinga

Piano Consultant

David L. Abell

Stunt Co-ordinator

Andy Armstrong

Cast**Tom Cruise**

Mitch McDeere

Jeanne Tripplehorn

Abby McDeere

Gene Hackman

Avery Tolar

Hal Holbrook

Oliver Lambert

Terry Kinney

Lamar Quinn

Wilford Brimley

William Devasher

Ed Harris

Wayne Tarrance

Holly Hunter

Tammy Hemphill

David Strathairn

Ray McDeere

Gary Busey

Eddie Lomax

Steven Hill

F. Denton Voyles

Tobin Bell

Nordic Man

Barbara Garrick

Kay Quinn

Jerry Hardin

Royce McKnight

Paul Calderon

Thomas Richie

Jerry Weintraub

Sonny Capps

Sullivan Walker

Barry Abanks

Karina Lombard

Young Woman on

Beach

Margo Martindale

Nina Huff

John Beal

Nathan Locke

Dean Norris

Squat Man

Lou Walker

Frank Mulholland

Debbie Turner

Rental Agent

Tommy Cresswell

Wally Hudson

David Kimball

Randall Dunbar

Don Jones

Michael D. Allen

Attorneys

Levi Frazier Jnr

Restaurant Waiter

Brian Casey

Telephone Installer

Reverend William J.

Parham

Minister

Victor Nelson

Cafe Waiter

Richard Ranta

Congressman Billings

Janie Paris

Madge

Frank Crawford

Judge

Bart Whiteman

Dutch

David Dwyer

Prison Guard

Mark Johnson

FBI Agents

Jerry Chipman

Technician

Afemo Omilami

Clinton Smith

Cotton Truck Drivers

Susan Elliott

Erin Branham

River Museum Guides

Ed Connelly

Pilot

Joey Anderson

Ruth

Deborah Thomas

Quinn's Maid

Tommy Matthews

Elvis Hemphill

Chris Schadrack

Jeffrey Ford

Jonathan Kaplan

Lawyer Recruiters

Rebecca Glenn

Young Woman

at Patio Bar

Terri Welles

Woman Dancing

With Avery

Gregory Goossen

Vietnam Veteran

Jeane Aufdenberg

Car Rental Agent

William R. Booth

Seaplane Pilot

The Lannie McMillan

Quartet

Peabody Musicians

Ollie Nightingale

Restaurant Singer

Teenie Hodges

Restaurant Lead

Guitarist

Little Jimmy King

Memphis Street

Musician

James White

Singer at Hyatt

13,920 feet**154 minutes**

but not what was said. Senior partner Oliver Lambert tells him that the FBI are always dogging the firm because the government is always losing tax cases against them. Later the mob's on-site man Devasher says he thinks they should get some "insurance" on Mitch and suggests that they send him with Tolar to the Caymans.

Once in the Caymans, Tolar flouts all the company rules about booze and philandering. Mitch too is approached by a bikini-clad woman, but he turns her down and takes a walk along the beach. In the shadows he sees a woman beating off a persistent man, and chases the assailant away. The woman wishes to express her gratitude, and Mitch fails to resist. Next day he visits diving instructor Barry Abanks, whose son lost his life with the two associates, and learns that the circumstances were suspicious.

Returning to Memphis, Mitch drives to the penitentiary to see his brother Ray, whose existence he has kept from the firm. Later he and Abby argue about his continual absence from home, and Mitch tells her his concerns. He contacts a private detective friend of Ray's, Eddie Lomax, and asks him to investigate the deaths. Eddie is killed by a Nordic thug and his death is witnessed by his secretary/lover Tammy.

At a seminar in Washington, Mitch is again approached by Tarrance who tells him about Lomax and introduces him to FBI chief Denton Voyles. Either Mitch works for them or he will be indicted when the FBI finally crack the mob connection. Mitch agrees a price of a million dollars plus freedom for Ray. Mitch copies the secret files in Tolar's office, setting up Tammy in a nearby office where she can make multiples. But Devasher finds out, and decides to scare Mitch by showing him photos of Mitch making love to the beach girl. Mitch confesses his infidelity to Abby, and she resolves to leave him.

Abby is visited by Tolar, and turns down his offer of a trip to the Caymans. Tolar is flying in the company Lear jet; its hold is stuffed with cash. Remembering a secret file room in the condo, Mitch arranges for Tammy to plunder it while Tolar is out, but Tammy learns that Tolar has cancelled his diving lesson and her emergency call to warn Mitch is intercepted by Abby. Abby flies to the Caymans and, having drugged Tolar's drink, joins Tolar in his room. Before passing out, he confesses his disappointment at her complicity.

An FBI informer tells the mob that Mitch is the leak. Fortunately, Tarrance finds out in time to save him. Mitch refuses FBI protection and flees to Mud Island with the Nordic thug in pursuit. Devasher sends a hit squad to the Caymans, then joins the pursuit of Mitch. In a darkened room Mitch engineers Devasher and the thug's mutual destruction. With Ray released and the documents copied, Mitch confronts the mob bosses. He explains that confidentiality prevents him from revealing what he knows as long as he

remains unharmed. But he also tells them that the firm are guilty of mail fraud. Mitch bargains his safety for theirs, providing the firm is destroyed in the process. Later, Mitch gives Tarrance the mail fraud evidence and he and Abby drive away to a new life.

 *The Firm* is a peculiar hybrid in that it began life as a film script and yet became a best-selling blockbuster novel long before a film emerged. Author John Grisham has published two more such money-spinners about the legal profession since. The delay may explain why the novel and the script have such divergent narratives, albeit starting from the same premise. However, the differences ought to be instructive about what is currently acceptable in mainstream fiction but not in the cinema.

Prominent among many plot changes between novel and film is the way that the hero Mitch is allowed to come away from his ordeal almost unscathed. The novel is truer to the inflexible come-uppance of the Faustian pact: Mitch is allowed no way back into 'normal' society but has to become a permanent fugitive from the mob, cruising the obscure parts of the Caribbean on a never-ending limbo holiday. That the Tom Cruise character learns his moral lesson at so little cost suggests a star flexing his box-office muscles at the plot's expense.

The casting of Gene Hackman may likewise explain the unlooked-for frisson between Tolar and Abby. If Jeanne Tripplehorn had had some of the small-town hunger about her that Mitch and Abby are meant to exude, then her tacit fascination with him might be in character. Instead the two co-stars look too much at home in their *Hello!*-spread house, even after they know it's bugged. It's as if the 80s had never finished and greed still seemed the smarter option.

Grisham's novel offers a particularly stark set of formula parameters: a large and powerful institution, a young independently-minded go-getter, and a sinister conspiracy that draws our hero into morally dubious territory. Pollack approaches the simple but event-stuffed page-turner (as rejigged by, among others, Robert Towne, who has scripted many a drama of festering immorality) as an edifice to be climbed at frantic pace, fired up by star-power and a blues piano score. However, the pacing is lumbered by such rambling spellings-out as the whispered exchanges on the McDeeres' front porch.

On the plus side, a legal thriller has for once avoided the pitfalls of a static and talky genre - there are no courtroom scenes. Yet *The Firm's* production values are so thick-pile that they tend to suppress the excitement. Furthermore, even a cast as prestigious as this one can't paper over Grisham's one great logical plot hole, which has survived into the film: why, if they're flying money out of the country in a Lear jet, do the mob need an expensive firm of lawyers to launder their money?

Nick James

The Fugitive

USA 1993**Director: Andrew Davis****Certificate**

12

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Warner Bros

Executive Producers

Keith Barish

Roy Huggins

Producer

Arnold Kopelson

Co-producers

Peter MacGregor-Scott

Stephen Brown

Nana Greenwald

Unit Production Managers

Robert Grand

James A. Dennett

Location Managers

Michael J. Malone

2nd Unit:

Richard Moskal

2nd Unit Directors

North Carolina:

Terry J. Leonard

Chicago:

Mike Gray

Casting

Amanda Mackey

Cathy Sandrich

Chicago:

Richard S. Kordos

Nan Charbonneau

Associate:

Karen Miller

North Carolina:

Gloria Hancock

Assistant Directors

Tom Mack

David Kelley

James A. Dennett II

Robert Schick

North Carolina:

Brian E. Frankish

Dustin Bernard

Chicago:

Kenneth A. Flisak

Gary B. Goldman

Screenplay

Jeb Stuart

David Twohy

Story

David Twohy

Based on characters

created by Roy Huggins

Director of Photography

Michael Chapman

Colour

Astro Color

Prints by Technicolor

2nd Unit Directors

of Photography

North Carolina:

Gary H. Holt

Chicago:

Gary H. Holt

George Kohut

Aerial Photography

Frank M. Holgate

Camera Operators

Frank Miller

B:

Stephen St John

Robert Ulland

2nd Unit:

Brian C. Glover

Michael Kohnhorst

Steadicam Operators

Stephen St John

Robert Ulland

Video/Computer

Supervisor

Liz Radley

Special Visual Effects

Introvision

International

Supervisor:

William Mesa

Producer:

Nick Davis

Art Director:

Charles Wood

Photography:

John Mesa

Chris Dawson

Editors

Dennis Virkler

David Finfer

Dean Goodhill

Don Brochu

Richard Nord

Dov Hoenig

Production Designer

Dennis Washington

Art Director

Maher Ahmad

Set Design

Ann Harris

Nancy Mickelberry

Set Decorator

Rick Gentz

Special Effects**Co-ordinators**

Roy Arbogast

Tom Ryba

Pyrotechnics

Ultimate Effects

Models

Supervisor:

Doug Calli

Maker:

Scott Salsa

Music

James Newton Howard

Music Director

Marty Paich

Saxophone Solos

Wayne Shorter

Orchestrations

James Newton Howard

Brad Dechter

Chris Boardman

Music Producer

Michael Mason

Music Editor

Jim Weidman

Songs

"The Thrill Is Gone"

by Roy Hawkins, Rick

Darnell, performed

by B.B. King, Bobby

Bland; "Tahiti Tahiti"

by Marc Chantreau,

Pierre-Alain Dahan,

Slim Pezin, performed

by Voyage

Costume Design

Aggie Guerard Rodgers

Costume Supervisor

Linda Henrikson

Make-up

Supervisor:

Peter Robb-King

Artists:

Pat Gerhardt

Rodger Jacobs

Title Design

Nina Saxon

Film Design

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors

Foley Recordist

Mary Jo Lang
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Donald O. Mitchell
Michael Herbick
Frank A. Montano
Sound Effects Editors
Steven J. Schwalbe
Donald L. Warner Jnr
Greg Stacy
Victor Iorillo
Anthony R. Milch
Shawn Sykora
Marshall Winn
Jay Nierenberg
Frank Knies
Lance Brown
Glenn Hoskinson
Hector Gika
Michael Dressel
Patrick M. Bietz
Sam Gemette

Foley Artists

John Roesch
Alicia Stevenson
Technical Advisers
Marvin Lutes
Bruce L. Gerwertz
James M. Tantillo
Cory Franklin
James E. McLaughlin
Robb Smith
Sheldon Zenner
Jack Uellendahl
Tony Calabrese
Susan Phillips
Judge Toomin
Ed O'Donnell
John Rottger
Stunt Co-ordinator
Terry J. Leonard

Stunts

Chris Branham
Troy Brown
Hal Burton
Tom DeWier
Nick Dimitri
Jeannie Epper
Peter Epstein
Diamond Farnsworth
Teri Garland
Terry Jackson
Dean Jeffries
Rick LeFevour
Stacy Logan
Mike McGaughy
Jeff Ramsey
Glenn Randall
John-Clay Scott
Gary Wayton
Paula Wayton
Helicopter Pilots
Chicago:
Kevin LaRosa
Bruce Webb
North Carolina:
Cress Horne

Cast

Harrison Ford
Dr Richard Kimble
Tommy Lee Jones
Samuel Gerard
Sela Ward
Helen Kimble
Julianne Moore
Dr Anne Eastman
Joe Pantoliano
Cosmo Renfro
Andreas Katsulas
Fred Sykes
Jeroen Krabbé
Dr Charles Nichols
Daniel Roebuck
Biggs
L. Scott Caldwell
Poole
Tom Wood
Newman
Ron Dean
Detective Kelly
Joseph Kosala
Detective Rosetti
Miguel Nino
Tony Fosco
Chicago Cops
Joseph F. Fisher
Otto Sloan
James Lliautad
Paul
David Darlow
Dr Lentz
Tom Galouzis
James F. McKinsey
Surgeons
Mark D. Espinoza
Resident

John E. Ellis
Anesthesiologist
Gene Barge
Thomas C. Simmons
11th District Cops
Joseph Guzaldo
Prosecutor
Dick Cusack
Walter Guthrie
Nick Kusenko
Assistant Defence
Attorney
Joan Kohn
Assistant Prosecuting
Attorney
Joe D. Lauck
Forensic Technician
Joseph V. Guastaferr
Coroner
Andy Romano
Judge Bennett
Richard Riehle
Old Guard
Thom Vernon
Carlson
Ken Moreno
Partida
Eddie "Bo" Smith Jnr
Copeland
Frank Ray Perilli
Otis Wilson
Jail Officers
Pancho Demmings
Young Guard
Jim Wilkey
Bus Driver
Danny Goldring
Head Illinois State
Trooper
Nick Searcy
Sheriff Rawlins
Kevin Crowley
State Trooper
Michael James
Head Welder
Michael Skewes
Highway Patrolman
Ila Cathleen Stallings
Duty Nurse
Linda Casaletto
Rural Hospital Nurse
Cody Glenn
Paramedic
Cynthia Baker
Woman in Car
Johnny Lee Davenport
Marshall Henry
Mike Bacarella
Marshall Stevens
Bill Cusack
Tracing Technician
David Hodges
Marshall David
Lillie Richardson
Copeland's Girlfriend
Peter J. Caria IV
Billy
Tighe Barry
Windshield Washer
Monika Chabrowski
Polish Landlady
Lonnie Sima
Landlady's Son
Oksana Fedunyszyn
Myoelectric
Receptionist
Orlando Garcia
Desmondo
Afram Bill Williams
Salesman
Bruce L. Gewertz
Dr Bruce
Jane Lynch
Dr Kathy Wahlund
Joseph Rotkovich
Officer Joseph
Steven Lilovich
Officer Steve
Noelle Bou-Sliman
Myoelectric Technician
Roxanne Roberts
Alex Hernandez
Trauma Doctors
Theron Touche Lykes
Orderly
Joel Robinson
Patient
Greg Hollimon
Skating Orderly
Cheryl Lynn Bruce
OR Doctor
Marie Ware
Nurse Gladys
Bernard McGee
Man
Ann Whitney
Myoelectric Director

Lily Monkus
Willie Lucas
Desk Clerks
Turk Muller
Clearing Officer
Ana Maria Alvarez
La Cubana
Eugene F. Crededio
Visitation Guard
Maurice Person
Clive Driscoll
Terry Hard
Officer Hormel
Pam Zekman
David Pasquesi
Lester Holt
Jay Levine
John Drummond
Newscasters
Brent Shaphren
Stephen A. Landsman
B.J. Jones
Doctors at Bar

Drucilla A. Carlson
Gerard's Secretary
Margaret Moore
Nichols' Assistant
Manny Lopez
Seminar Doctor
John M. Watson Sr
Bones Roosevelt
Kirsten Nelson
Betty
Juan A. Ramirez
Man on "El"
Neil Flynn
Transit Cop
Allen Hamilton
Host
Eric Fudala
Hotel Security Guard

11,711 feet
130 minutes

Chicago. Richard Kimble, a respected vascular surgeon, returns home to find his wife Helen has been murdered by a one-armed man who struggles with him and escapes. On circumstantial evidence, Kimble is convicted of murder and sentenced to death. En route to prison, another convict fakes illness and stabs a guard, causing the bus to plunge off the road and on to a railroad track. The driver uncuffs Kimble so that he can see to the guard's wound and it falls to him to haul the man free when a train ploughs into the bus. Kimble makes his way to a rural hospital where he shaves off his beard and tends his injuries, while deputy marshal Samuel Gerard and his team take over the escape case.

Gerard picks up the trail and runs Kimble to ground, pursuing him into the tunnels behind a dam and confronting him at a precipitous outlet. When Gerard tells him he does not care if his quarry is innocent, Kimble jumps and is assumed dead by everyone but Gerard. In Chicago, Kimble contacts Dr Charles Nichols, a colleague, for a hand-out and impersonates a hospital janitor to gain access to computer records about prosthetic arms. Nichols admits to Gerard that Kimble is still alive. Gerard, following in his quarry's steps, also examines the records of men with prostheses. Kimble visits an imprisoned one-armed man who turns out not to be the killer; Gerard nearly catches him in the county lock-up but he escapes into a St. Patrick's Day parade. Kimble learns that the murderer is Fred Sykes, an ex-cop employed by a pharmaceuticals firm which wants to market the drug Kimble was involved in testing.

Kimble realises he was the intended murder victim and that Nichols, hoping to conceal the harmful side-effects of the drug, was instrumental in setting him up. Kimble phones Gerard from Sykes' apartment, knowing the call will be traced, and Gerard begins to piece together the evidence. Sykes attacks Kimble on an elevated railway train and is overpowered and left handcuffed to a pole. Kimble goes to a hotel where a medical conference is in progress and confronts Nichols during a speech. Kimble and Nichols fight and Kimble wins. Gerard catches up with them, finally admitting that Kimble is innocent. Vindicated, Kimble is taken back into custody.



Gotcha: Tommy Lee Jones

Devised by Roy Huggins and produced by Quinn Martin, *The Fugitive* TV series ran from 1963, when David Janssen's Dr David Kimble was first convicted of the murder committed by the one-armed man, to 1967, when Barry Morse's Lieutenant Gerard finally caught up with him and was forced to admit he had been pursuing the wrong man. A surprisingly subtle rethink of *Les Misérables*, the show was, while it was on the air, uniquely open-ended. Its hero faced problems that could not be solved within the 47 minute running time of a typical episode.

Sadly, the most disturbing aspect – the possibility that Dr Kimble, like successors such as Smith and Jones or the Incredible Hulk, would be left running in limbo without ever clearing his name – has inevitably been dropped in this feature version, which simply sticks together the plots of the pilot and the famous two-part story that wound up the series. What was interesting was the way a quirk of justice forced the middle-class Kimble to become an itinerant blue-collar worker, constantly dropped into situations that revealed social injustice. Despite his brief spell as a hispanic janitor, Harrison Ford's Kimble focuses resolutely on his own problem, never distracted, as Janssen was, by other people's plights. Four years of television, only a fraction of which dealt with Kimble's case, are here compressed into the hardly unfamiliar story of the innocent man on the run, trying to clear his name.

Given that it is shorn of much of its original purpose, *The Fugitive* is a remarkably successful Hollywood product, with a brilliantly contrived star double act pursuing different paths through the central plot. There is much pleasure to be had in the way Kimble and Gerard, respecting each other as the heroes and villains of Budd Boetticher Westerns used to, con-

tinually keep each other abreast of their investigations, solving the mystery together while rarely meeting. Andrew Davis, a newly promoted action man who has worked fruitfully with Tommy Lee Jones in *The Package* and *Under Siege*, makes the huffing and puffing chases seem fresh and surprising, managing with ingenuity such coups as the perilous bus crash that lands the survivors in the path of an oncoming train.

Early on, the film takes a tricky approach in undercutting Kimble's interrogation with his memories of the evening of the murder, not quite revealing enough information for us to judge what has actually happened until we are well into the chase. A medical conspiracy appears out of nowhere after about an hour of action, which gives rise to a few groaning moments and a confused expository sequence involving several subsidiary crimes. A whiff of 90s minority awareness can be detected in the needless complication which reveals the handicapped Sykes to be a lesser villain in the employ of an unconvincing mastermind.

Having suffered through the meretricious seriousness of *Regarding Henry* and the equally fudged pulp of *Patriot Games*, Harrison Ford finally gains back respect as the improbably hardy Dr Richard Kimble, grimly surviving certain death and dropping years when he shaves off his white-tinged beard. The most interesting character, as in the series, is Gerard; while Barry Morse's cop was a near-psychotic loner, Jones' marshal is surrounded by a Hawksian team he alternately cajoles and abuses with a delightful stream of patter. It is Gerard's professionalism which keeps him on the case even when the quarry is almost certainly dead ("That'll make him easier to catch, then") and forces him finally to concede not only that Kimble is innocent but that his innocence matters.

Kim Newman

Lashou Shentan (Hard-Boiled)

Hong Kong 1992

Director: John Woo

Certificate
18

Distributor
Metro Tartan
Milestone Pictures
For Golden Princess

Producers
Linda Kuk
Terence Chang

Production Supervisor/Associate

Producer
Amy Chin
Production Co-ordinator
Iris Mok

Production Manager
Ken Wu

Unit Manager
Ng Shing-Tat

Location Manager
Rosanna Kwok

2nd Unit Director
Patrick Leung

Third Unit Director
Ng Hon-Keung

Assistant Directors
Kingson Shek
Sylvia Liu

Screenplay
Barry Wong
Director of Photography
Wong Wing-Heng
In colour

Optical Effects
Ting Yuen-Tai
Tang Wai-Yuk

Editors
John Woo
Kai Kit-Wai
David Woo
Jack

Art Directors
James Leung
Joel Chong

Special Effects
Lau Hon-Cheung

Music
Michael Gibbs
Additional:
James Wong

Music Performed by
Synthesiser:
Benjamin Wittman
Jamshied Sharifi
Saxophone:
Jim Odgren
Ole Mathisen

Music Editor
David Wu

Choreography
Cheung Juhluh

Costume Design
Bruce Yu
Janet Chun

Make-up
Bernadette Cheng

Title Design
Animation Shop

Sound Recordist
Music:
Max Rose

Sound Effects
Brian Schwegmann
Ching Siu-Lung

Cantonese Dialogue
Director
Ting Yu

Mandarin Dialogue
Director
Karen Wang's Studio

Stunt Co-ordinators
Philip Kwok
Cars:
Bruce Law

Cast
Chow Yun-Fat
Inspector Yuen
("Tequila")

Tony Leung
Tony
Teresa Mo
Teresa

Philip Chan
Superintendent Chan
Anthony Wong
Johnny Wong
Kwan Hoi-Shan
Hoi

Bowie Lam
Ah Lung
John Woo
Barman in Jazz Club
Philip Kwok
Tung Wai

Y. Yonemura
Bobby Au Yeung
Ng Shui-Ting
Johnson Law

Lau Kong
Lam Wai-Sun
Benny Lam
Kenny Lam
Michael Dingo
Lai Hoi-Shan

11,385 feet
126 minutes

Subtitles

● Hong Kong. Police detectives Inspector Yuen (nicknamed Tequila) and A-Lung attack a gang of gun-running gangsters in an extended shoot-out, during which A-Lung is killed. Yuen is reprimanded by his Chief Superintendent for his excessive use of force. Gangster hitman Tony – in reality an undercover detective – assassinates Little Mustache, a member of gunrunner Hoi's gang, who was supplying information to Hoi's rival Johnny Wong. Tony joins forces with Wong's gang, which includes Little Koi, also a police informer. This group is confronted by Yuen, who attempts to arrest Tony; Little Koi saves Yuen's life by knocking him to the ground. Later, Yuen meets Little Koi and is told that Wong is planning to attack Hoi's warehouse arsenal that night.

Wong and Tony oversee the assault, in which gun-wielding motorcyclists

massacre Hoi's workers. Hoi and his minions arrive and are surrounded by Wong's men. Hoi attempts to do a deal with Tony, asking that his people be spared in exchange for his own life. Tony pretends to agree, shoots Hoi, then massacres his surviving underlings. Yuen, who has been hidden, now swings into action and another gun battle ensues. After Tony has declined to shoot Yuen, Yuen realises he must be an undercover cop, and surprises him at his boat, where they join forces repelling a further gun attack. Tony is wounded, and Yuen hides when Wong arrives; Wong promises medical aid for Tony in the hospital he owns – which also houses his main weapons store.

Ordered to kill Little Koi by Wong, Tony intervenes when he sees Koi set upon by Wong's gunman Mad Dog. Tony arranges for Koi to survive the shooting; Koi then tells Yuen about the hospital arsenal and is taken there for treatment. Tony goes to the hospital to save Koi with Yuen's help. Koi, attempting to escape, is killed by Mad Dog. Tony and Yuen sneak into the basement armoury, but attempting to break in, Tony is electrocuted. Yuen revives him but Mad Dog appears and another battle ensues.

Amid the mayhem, Mad Dog objects to Wong's attempt to demolish the building with explosives; he tries to kill him, but is shot by Wong. Yuen goes back to help his sweetheart Teresa rescue a baby left behind in the building; Wong takes him prisoner and drags him out of the hospital to confront Yuen and the police. Tony grabs Yuen's gun and shoots him by firing the gun through his own body. Yuen then shoots Wong. At police HQ, Tony's file is ritually burned.

● *Hard-Boiled's* press kit carries quotes from the likes of James Cameron, Quentin Tarantino (who calls John Woo "the most exciting director to emerge in action cinema since Sergio Leone") and *Variety* ("the Mozart of Mayhem"). This lavish quoted praise signals an intention on the part of the film's British distributor to market the film both as an 'action' spectacular and as the work of an *auteur* whose boldly kinetic style has already achieved much critical approval. This approach will probably

reap dividends despite the fact that, compared to Woo's 1989 *The Killer*, *Hard-Boiled* is a disappointment. The energy, wit and panache with which Woo stages his massively extended action scenes remain as potent as before, but what the film fatally lacks – as the absurdly contrived plot indicates – are characters and a story which would invest these scenes with a worthwhile moral impact. Instead, the emphasis is on action as an end in itself.

In *The Killer*, much is made of the friendship between Chow Yun-Fat's character Jeff and the cop on his trail; Jeff is granted a definite moral and emotional stature despite the patent absurdities of the storyline. *Hard-Boiled* trades in similar ideas, with nowhere near the same success. Tony makes a paper crane every time he kills; he also says he wishes to escape from his 'dark' life (to the North Pole!) and there's some budding respect between him and Yuen. But here these laboured kinship notions seem secondhand and merely incidental to the main business of setting up the next spectacular action set piece. Whereas in *The Killer*, the shoot-outs served to define the characters and the relationship between them (and allowed Woo to have much fun at the expense of genre conventions), here such elements have a musty off-the-peg quality – they're simply a loose framework from which to hang the big production numbers.

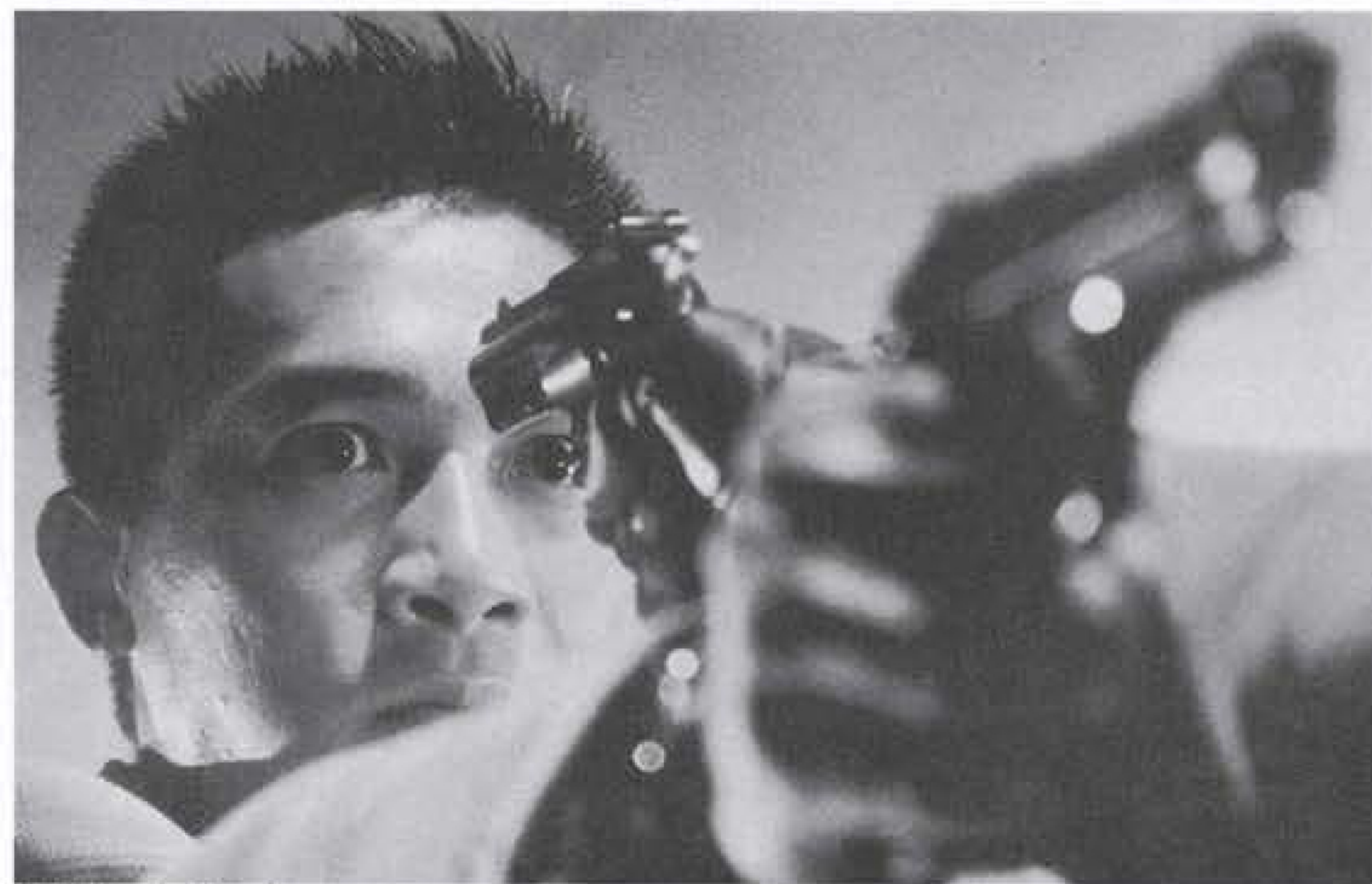
The action numbers certainly are immense, with a prodigious body and bullet count and a dynamic fluency in their choreography, editing and sheer speed that is frequently stunning. Perhaps no other director can currently match Woo's heavy calibre finesse in combining gun-play and movement. Characters almost always run, leap and dive while firing. Bullets weave intricate patterns of blasted bodies, windows, furniture and fluttering masses of paper. Slow motion frequently extends pivotal moments and emphasises the grace of destruction, the beauty of disintegration and the raw power of pyrotechnics. The film's musical-like choreography and the overall rhythmic quality of the destruction suggest a directing style that has as much in common with Busby Berkeley as it does with Sam Peckinpah. It's an essentially decorative aesthetic of

destruction in which pyrotechnics and firepower are celebrated for their own sake. In absurdly close proximity to each other, the leading characters shoot less to kill than to sustain their perverse dance-of-death courtship for as long as possible. In *Hard-Boiled* this is best illustrated in the scene in which two characters run alongside either side of a shattering glass partition while harmlessly blasting at each other. As in a dance routine, it's the performance rather than its goal that's important. The killing zone in front of camera is like the endlessly extended stage in a vintage musical, its many disposable villains arrayed much as the scores of anonymous showgirls in a Busby Berkeley revue. On the evidence of *Hard-Boiled*, John Woo fits snugly and unproblematically into the same straightforward 'action' category as workaday straight-to-video directors like Aaron Norris and Craig R. Baxley, rather than with such films as *Taxi Driver*, *The Wild Bunch* or John Milius' *Dillinger*. These films all have their pivotal action sequences, but they're also more than 'action' films, because their directors use the 'action' as a way to explore their characters and the social milieu in which they struggle – through violence – to define themselves. Such films creatively blur the distinction between safely synthetic screen action and the kind of gut-wrenchingly physical violence that we recognise as real. *The Killer* at times moves into this dangerous territory, but *Hard-Boiled* signally lacks such an exploratory urge. Though the stunts are magnificent, the casual plotting, low comic asides and thin characterisations most often recall the busy but emotionally sterile antics of James Bond or *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*. The implausibly foolish villain Wong is especially mundane and derivative.

Perhaps the scene that best sums up *Hard-Boiled's* moral timidity is the one in which Yuen blasts at least six anonymous gunmen while holding a baby, then exclaims, "Hey, X-rated action!" before wiping a victim's blood off the child's face. That line is a wink to the audience that Woo is sending up the action genre, but it's also an admission that the movie won't stray out of that genre's bloody but bland parameters. The baby won't get its head blown off – if it did, we'd be in a much more dangerous, far more interesting film.

As it is, *Hard-Boiled* is a little like what *The Wild Bunch* might have been if William Holden's character hadn't been killed at the end; or *Taxi Driver* if Travis Bickle hadn't been mentally unstable; or *Dirty Harry* if the lead had been played by Elvis Presley or Glen Campbell. On this evidence, John Woo is indeed "one of the best action movie directors working in the world today." However, that's as much a criticism as a compliment, because *The Killer* had strongly suggested that he could also be much more than that. His forthcoming Hollywood debut, *Hard Target* with Jean-Claude Van Damme, will hopefully confirm he can be again.

Tom Tunney



Point blank: Tony Leung

Laws Of Gravity

USA 1992

Director: Nick Gomez

Certificate 18	Wardrobe David Smith
Distributor Oasis Films	Make-up Mina Port
Production Company The Shooting Gallery	Title Design Leni Gayle
Executive Producer Larry Meistrich	Sound Recordists Amanda Kavanagh
Producers Bob Gosse Larry Meistrich	Producers Jeff Pullman Jean Gilliland Bill Ivy
Line Producer Bob Gosse	Additional: Tom Paul
Associate Producer Danny Silverman	Cast Peter Greene Jimmy Edie Falco Denise Adam Trese Jon Arabella Field Celia Paul Schulze Frankie Saul Stein Sal James McCauley Kenny Anibel Lierras Ray Miguel Sierra Vasquez Larry Meistrich Pete Rick Greol Kevin David Troup Sullivan Patricia Sullivan Terry Tony Fernandez Tommy John Gallagher Bobby Eli Kabillio Guy William Sage Guy's Pal Dave Tuttle Tod Judith Boxley Mark Chandler Bailey Kim Gambino Dieidre Bodie-Henderson Picnic Goers Anthony Ingolgia Smiley
Screenplay Nick Gomez	8,815 feet
Director of Photography Jean de Segonzac	98 minutes
Colour In colour	
Editor Tom McArdle	
Production Designer Monica Bretherton	
Set Decorators Jenny Alex Tom Jermusch	
Music Douglas Cuomo	
Songs "Shakiyla (JRH)", "Word From the Wise", "Baby Star" performed by Poor Righteous Teachers; "Munchies For Your Bass" performed by Nemisis; "More Than a Player", "Comin' Like This", "Let the Rhythm Take You" performed by 2nd II None; "Christmas in Hollis" performed by Run-D.M.C.; "Girls Dem a Haf It" performed by Derrick Irie; "New Jersey Drive" performed by Nardo Ranks, Junior Demus; "Religion", "Only God Knows" performed by Peg Tassej	

Jimmy and Jon are a pair of small-time Brooklyn hoods. Jimmy, happily married to the strong-minded Denise, seems content with a life of shoplifting, sleeping late and helping boxes fall off the backs of lorries, which he then sells on to the local fence Tommy. But his younger pal Jon is restless and itching for trouble – he deliberately skips a court appearance for a shop-lifting charge, thereby ensuring that the police will come looking for him.

When Frankie, a shady old acquaintance who has been hiding out in Florida, pulls up in a 'borrowed' car with a bag full of hand-guns in the boot, Jimmy, who is in debt to Sal, the local loan shark, agrees to help Frankie sell them. Though Sal urges him to stay away from Frankie and get a job, Jimmy lets Frankie sleep on his sofa and hide the guns in his apartment. Frankie, Jimmy and Jon try, rather unsuccessfully, to do business: every



What's a mook: Arabella Field, Adam Trese

time they find a potential buyer, the deal degenerates into generalised abuse, usually instigated by the increasingly erratic Jon. He is eventually picked up by the police during a scuffle on the street with his girlfriend Celia, who has left him after he punched her. Jimmy, desperate to raise the \$1200 bail money, and failing to get it from Sal, sells Frankie's guns to Tommy. When Frankie discovers this, he beats Tommy unconscious. Jon catches up with Frankie at the local bar and starts a fight, until Jimmy arrives and tries to shout some sense into him. As they're getting cleaned up in the gents, they hear that Frankie is waiting outside with a gun. Though his friends try to hold him back, Jon shakes everyone off and runs into the street where Frankie shoots him dead.

Nick Gomez's bold debut – nervily photographed, seamlessly acted and shot in twelve days on a \$38,000 budget – owes more than a small debt to Martin Scorsese's vision of urban lowlife. *Laws of Gravity* inhabits the world of swaggering, low-rent tough guys made familiar by *Mean Streets*, but conveys a grubbier, more pathetic reality. Scorsese's wise guys had a place – in the criminal hierarchy, in the Family, in relation to the Church. Even when they were buffoonish, they had something, whether a psychotic unpredictability or a relentless need for revenge, which made them genuinely threatening.

While the potential for glamour in this conceit of unassailable machismo was taken to gaudy art-pulp heights by Quentin Tarantino in *Reservoir Dogs*, Gomez ignores it in favour of a gritty, documentary feel; his dead-end dudes have none of the sinister grace of Scorsese's goodfellas or Tarantino's cool villains. Stripped of any cultural milieu, they're inarticulate where they would be glib and inept where they would be efficient.

Using largely improvised dialogue and an inexperienced but wholly believable cast, the film is almost disorientatingly naturalistic. Like life, it has its longueurs. But more often, the deceptively casual style illuminates the fragility of the characters as they stumble through their daily threats and transactions – the film's grainy, tightly framed images keep catching the anxiety beneath their bluster.

The basic situation mirrors that of *Mean Streets*, where an older, more

responsible friend, out of a confused sense of loyalty towards a reckless buddy, hastens inevitable tragedy. The hot-headed Jon here, unlike his namesake Johnny Boy, isn't a nihilistic maniac – he's just a wired, impulsive kid whose idea of sorting out a misunderstanding is to drink a guy's beer, then punch him in the face. But Jimmy loves him, and Adam Trese allows Jon just enough dopey boyishness – he looks, believably, about 19 – to give the softhearted, honourable Jimmy a reason to put up with his constant antagonising of everyone around him.

At the heart of the action is documentary cinematographer Jean de Segonzac's dynamic but never obtrusive handheld camera work. Shaking down the aisles of a drugstore during a shoplifting spree or bopping in jaunty rhythm with Jimmy and Jon as they saunter down the street, the camera gives the loose-limbed, episodic story some vigour. Even a comparatively weak scene where Jimmy, Denise and Celia try to dissuade Jon from evading the court is livened up by the camera panning from face to face like an inquisitive fifth party to the discussion. Occasionally, the camera's mobility is overused, to unintentionally comic effect: when Jimmy and Jon run away with stolen goods from a lorry, the camera jogs after them and the image shakes up like a spoof of action news.

The film's greatest strength is its fresh take on what are now nearly stock situations. The final scene is handled in deliberately anti-dramatic style, with the camera jostling for position in the crowd outside the bar: you hear the shot, but you miss the action. When the camera finds its feet again, it's all over. The women, too, don't play by the rules: they shatter the men's bravado by denying them an audience. Even Frankie, certainly the film's most vicious character (played with singular creepiness by the fresh-faced, ever smiling Paul Schulze), can't get no respect: when he comes looking for his guns, Denise and Celia are engrossed in a conversation about split ends unmoved by the fact that in the background he is raging in a futile search for his weaponry.

Nonetheless, we've been down these streets before. And when you know what's around the corner, some of the impact of a film, even one as vivid as *Laws Of Gravity*, is lost.

Caren Myers

The Night We Never Met

USA 1993

Director: Warren Leight

Certificate 15	Guest Soloist: Don Leight
Distributor Guild	Music Supervisor Lynn Geller
Production Company Miramax Films	Music Editor David Carbonara
Executive Producers Sidney Kimmel Harvey Weinstein Bob Weinstein	Choreography John Carrafa
Executive in Charge of Production Meryl Poster	Costume Design Ellen Lutter
Producer Michael Peyser	Wardrobe Supervisors Jill Anderson Marcia Patten
Co-producer Rudd Simmons	Make-up Artists Joe Cuervo Bernadette Mazur Kevin Aucoin
Associate Producer Janet Graham	Titles/Opticals The Effects House
Production Co-ordinator Shell Hecht	Supervising Sound Editor Dan Sable
Production Manager Rudd Simmons	Sound Editors Kevin Lee Magdaline Volaitis
Unit Manager Jeremiah Samuels	ADR Editor Deborah Wallach
Location Manager Sasha Tsyrlin	Sound Recordist William Sarokin
Post-production Co-ordinator Lonnie Kendel	Dolby stereo
Casting Billy Hopkins Suzanne Smith	Sound Re-recordist Peter Waggoner
Associates: Kerry Barden Diana Jaher	Foley Artist Brian Vancho
Assistant Directors J. Miller Tobin Rob Hallenbake Judy Gorjanc	Loop Group Bianca Camacho Steven Cook Suzanne Dottino Nicholas J. Giangulio Sondra James Adrienne King Ross Klavan Craig Sechler
Screenplay Warren Leight	Stunt Driver Pete Bucossi
Director of Photography John A. Thomas scope/vision	
Colour DuArt	Cast Matthew Broderick Sam Lester Annabella Sciorra Ellen Holder Kevin Anderson Brian McVeigh Jeanne Tripplehorn Pastel Justine Bateman Janet Beehan Michael Mantell Aaron Holder Christine Baranski Lucy Doris Roberts Dominic Chianese Nosy Neighbours Tim Guinee Kenneth Bradley White Todd Greg Germann Eddie Dana Wheeler-Nicholson Inga Louise Lasser Mrs Winkler Bill Campbell Shep Michelle Hurst Leslie Lewis Black Marty Holder Ranjit Chowdhry Cabbie Naomi Campbell French Cheese Shopper Richard Poe Bartender Katherine Houghton Less/More Cheese Woman David Slavin Chuck Barber Brooke Smith Catha Bitty Sohram Pharmacy Clerk

Billy Strong
Doorman
Catherine Lloyd Burne
Deli Customer
Michael Mastrototaro
Triple Cream Cheese
Shopper
Michael Imperioli
Suzanne Dottino
Cleaning Customers
Jose Evello Alvarez
"My Name is Eduardo"
Paul Guilfoyle
Sparrow's Nest
Salesman

Davidson Thomson
Foreign Film Actor
Kathryn Rossetter
"Excuse Me" Shopper
Mary B. McCann
Yogurt Eating Date
Steven Goldstein
Cheese Man
Suzanne Lanza
Shep's New Date

7,979 feet
89 minutes

Fed up with sharing his squalid apartment, Sam rents a Greenwich Village studio flat with two others on a time-share basis. By using a rota, each person has sole access to the flat for two nights a week. The other two 'roommates' are Brian and Ellen. Brian is an engaged stockbroker and the leaseholder who wants to hold onto the flat for swinging bachelor parties. Ellen is a dental hygienist who lives on Long Island and wants a Manhattan pied-a-terre to paint and escape her dull dry-cleaner husband. Without meeting, Sam and Ellen establish a rapport and communicate through notes. He admires her paintings and leaves her tasty leftovers to eat. Brian leaves beer cans and empty pizza boxes lying about. Due to confusion over a swap of days on the rota, Ellen thinks that Sam is the 'bad' roommate who destroyed her curtains and basil plants and that Brian is the 'good' one. Determined to seduce him, she arrives on one of Brian's nights. Not only is she disappointed by his dreadful lovemaking, she realises that she has copulated

with 'the wrong guy'. Eventually, Sam and Ellen meet up at last, sort out the confusion, fall in love, and set up house together in the apartment as Brian leaves to marry his fiancée.

Back in the 80s, an American social geographer named Sharon Zukin wrote a book called *Loft Living*. It is now considered a landmark study of how space and property intersect with class and taste. Zukin described how 'lofts' - open plan apartments converted from obsolete industrial workspaces in Lower Manhattan - first became trendy living spaces for artists. The properties became chic, and soon yuppies from the financial district moved in, and later on anyone who yearned for and could afford the kind of bohemian but swanky lifestyle that lofts came to represent.

Despite the minor fact that the main locus of action is a brownstone studio rather than a loft, *The Night We Never Met* is effectively a fictionalization of Zukin's thesis. Its three central characters are a representative sample of the types who now swarm the Village and SoHo areas where sweatshops used to be (roughly Camden and Covent Garden in London terms). Sam is a service industry work-slave in a gourmet delicatessen, financially poor but rich in cultural capital. Ellen is at once an aspirant artist and an upwardly mobile 'incomer' from the suburbs. To complete the demographics, Brian is an all-too conspicuously consuming stockbroker, demonised in line with today's backlash against the

values of Wall Street, both the place and film. Were it not for the generally good quality of the acting, they would be as stereotypical as composite portraits in a sociological study of taste patterns by disciples of Pierre Bourdieu.

The initial concept of three characters who hardly meet is intriguing, but not as neatly executed as it might be by first-time director Warren Leight. Less a comedy of errors than of manners, this is more a Downtown *When Harry Met Sally...* than a New York *Mystery Train*. If you're in the mood to indulge in some light cultural snobbery, you'll enjoy this film. Shiver alternately with disgust and delight as you assess the taste of the sets! Pat yourself on the back as you spot the Manhattan locations and the cameos by model Naomi Campbell, writer/performer Eric Bogosian, and the director Ranjit Chowdry (extra points for Americans who remember Louise Lasser, Woody Allen's ex-wife and former star of the cult soap *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*). Sneer at new-age vegans, at people who like Neil Diamond, and at performance artists! Reminiscent of *Singles*, which also centred on an apartment block, *The Night We Never Met* is a likeably shallow movie for Generation X-ers, slackers, and twentysomethings who like their love stories flattened with a little cynicism and pat one-liners ("Sex is like politics, the incumbent always has the advantage"). Like lofts themselves, it's a rickety structure with trendy interior design, an old-fashioned sex comedy for the nouveau hip.

Leslie Felperin Sharman



Bijou with room for improvement: Matthew Broderick

The Punk

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Mike Sarne

Certificate
15
Distributor
Videodrome
Production Company
Videodrome
Producers
Robin Mahoney
Mike Sarne
Associate Producers
David Goldstein
William Sarne
Production Manager
Lisa Lake
Post-production Supervisor
Matthew Salkeld
Assistant Directors
William Beaton
Glenna Forster-Jones
Screenplay
Mike Sarne
Based on the book by
Gideon Sams
Director of Photography
Alan M. Trow
Colour
FujiFilm
prints by
Metrocolor
Camera Operator
Sacha Austin
Opticals
Capital FX
Editor
Gwyn Jones
Art Director
Eleanor Baker
Music Director
Claudia Sarne
Music Editors
Robin Mahoney
Matthew Salkeld
Songs
"Trying To Get To You" by Nigel Powell, Robin Mahoney, Claudia Sarne, "Sweet Mystery", "Go To Life" by Claudia Sarne, performed by Claudia Sarne; "You Don't Need Money" by Charlie Creed-Miles, Martin Harvey, performed by Martin Harvey; "Push the Clouds Away" by Charlie Creed-Miles, Dee Major, performed by Dee Major, Charlie Creed-Miles, Charlie Holmes; "Miltons Sex Rap" by Charlie Creed-Miles, Dee Major, performed by Charlie Creed-Miles, Dee Major; "Just As Fat" by Charlie Creed-Miles, Charlie Holmes, performed by Charlie Creed-Miles, Charlie Holmes, Martin Harvey; "Come Outside" by Charles Blackwell, "Eddie the Eagle" by The Keatings, performed by Mike Sarne; "Eh Deh Deh-Oh" by Charlie Creed-Miles, Glenna Forster-Jones, performed by Charlie Creed-Miles, Mike Sarne, Glenna Forster-Jones; "She's Alright" by and performed by Prima Shock; "Looki Looki" by Mike Sarne, Robin Mahoney, performed by Videodrome
Wardrobe Supervisor
Ann Hardiman
Make-up
The Make-up Centre
Chief:
Penny Delamar
Shawyer
Title Design
Beaton

Sound Editors
Robin Mahoney
Matthew Salkeld
Sound Recordists
Richard King
Hugh Graham
Dolby stereo
Stunt Co-ordinator
Gerry Crampton
Stunts
Roy Alon

Cast
Charlie Creed-Miles
David
Vanessa Hadaway
Rachel
David Shawyer
David's Father
Jess Conrad
Rachel's Father
Jacqueline Sharvellis
David's Mother
Yolanda Mason
Rachel's Stepmother
Alex Mollo
Stray Cat
Peter Miles
Shakespeare
R.J. Bell
R.J.
Martin Harvey
Lefty
Julian Wooley
Monk
David Doyle
Roger Rabbit
Daniel Hsley
Louie Simpson
Anthony Okunbowa
Sam Adams
Punk Friends
Brian Miller
Fishmonger
Glenna Forster-Jones
Rosemary Smith
Actresses
Matthew Salkeld
William Sarne
Pool Players
Fiona Denison
Girl in Squat
Andrew Gordon
Anthony Gammon
Stray Cat Mates
Zach Vanderfelt
Nurse
Sam Cox
Laura Cox
Psychiatric Patients
Cleo Sylvestre
Woman in Fish Shop
Catherine Reid
Small Girl in Fish Shop
George Ellis-Jones
Paul Tate
Colin Thompson
Rupert Sharp
Policemen
Jeffrey Harris
Psychiatric Doctor
Helen Gill
Doctor
Robert Heath
Juvenile Lead
Fernando Sison
Fillipino Butler
Carmen Kalaw
Fillipino Maid

8,640 feet
96 minutes



Pretty vacant: Charlie Creed-Miles

David, a 19-year-old unemployed punk, saunters up Portobello Road, drops into a Notting Hill pub to play pool and ends up getting into a fight with psychopathic rocker Stray Cat. Fleeing into the Gate Theatre, he chances upon Rachel, a young rich-kid New York actress playing Juliet in an alternative production. The pair are instantly attracted, and the pair meet later at a party and begin their courtship, much to the dismay of her jealous ex-boyfriend, Stray Cat.

Meanwhile, exasperated by his son's cheerful nihilism, David's policeman father has thrown him out of the house, leaving the boy to fend for himself in a squat. David gets a job working for a fishmonger and adapts easily to his new life, until one of his close friends dies in a drug overdose. The boy is devastated, especially as he himself has continually resisted the approaches of the local drug dealer.

His romance with Rachel provides solace, and the two read each other Rimbaud whilst making love in the squat. Distraught at his departure, his mentally ill mother ends up back in hospital, while Rachel's rich, decadent film director father takes a dislike to David, and won't let her see him. Acting out her rebellion in full, Rachel turns punk rocker and escapes from home to find her 'Romeo'.

David meets Stray Cat on the street and the two have a showdown. Stray Cat is stabbed to death and David is taken away by the drug dealer to hide in a churchyard. He leaves him with a large dose of heroin which David eventually snorts. When Rachel finds David unconscious, she thinks he's dead, and breaks down. He comes to, however, and the couple are happily reunited.

Adapted from Gideon Sams' 1976 cult novel and optioned by Mike Sarne – a one-hit wonder whose

song 'Come Outside' went to Number One in 1962, and who directed *Myra Breckinridge* in 1970 – this curious mixture of different youth cults tries too desperately to be hip. Its DIY attitude is admirable: Sarne re-mortgaged his house, borrowed £500,000 and got some cautious City backing to finance the film, shot on a shoestring by himself and a small production crew of former film students all under 25.

Despite its edgy, independent spirit and fine photography, this latter-day *Romeo and Juliet* with punks pitted against rockers fails to convince. The original writer Sams, who died tragically young in New York, will probably be turning in his grave. If there's one thing certain about punk, it's that you have to get your sartorial facts right. Even nostalgia punks now on the Kings Road don't wear full bondage gear, and our hero – chirpy, Cockerney and entertaining as he is – comes over as an anachronism. Lurching between relevant comment and parody, *The Punk* ends up being neither 1976 nor 1993, and loses its impact.

There are some nice moments, though – the slow motion pool cue 'sword fight', the mock-up rap dance tussle between David and his friend, his mother emerging like Clytemnestra from her psychiatric ward. The soundtrack also, is excellent: sparse, knowing and funky, it's composed mainly by the film's capable star Charlie Creed-Miles.

Pacy and engaging but self-conscious, *The Punk* has the feel of that *bête noire* of punk cred – middle-class kids acting out working-class rebellion. Although the film is aimed squarely at the youth market, even the kids will be bemused by the subcultures. After all, if it isn't a punk, rap or even proper rave teen film they can call their own, what is it?

Lucy O'Brien

Raining Stones

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Ken Loach

Certificate

15

Distributor

First Independent

Production Company

A Parallax Pictures production for Channel 4

Producer

Sally Hibbin

Production Co-ordinator

Shellie Smith

Production Manager

Lesley Stewart

Location Manager

Jeff Bowen

Assistant Directors

Tommy Gormley

David Gilchrist

Ben Johnson

Screenplay

Jim Allen

Director of Photography

Barry Ackroyd

In colour

Editor

Jonathan Morris

Production Designer

Martin Johnson

Art Director

Fergus Clegg

Music

Stewart Copeland

Songs

"Something Good" by Kate Bush, Utah Saints, performed by Utah Saints; "Nasty" by Mark French, Bradley Carter, performed by Sy-Kick; "Lock Up" by and performed by Zero B

Wardrobe

Anne Sinclair

Make-up

Louise Fisher

Title Design

Peter Watson

Sound Editor

Kevin Brazier

Sound Recordists

Ray Beckett

Music:

Jeff Seitz

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist

David Old

Stunt Co-ordinator

Perry Davey

Stunt Driver

Mark Southworth

Cast

Bruce Jones

Bob Williams

Julie Brown

Anne Williams

Gemma Phoenix

Coleen Williams

Ricky Tomlinson

Tommy

Tom Hickey

Father Barry

Mike Fallon

Jimmy

Ronnie Ravey

Butcher

Lee Brennan

Irishman

Karen Henthorn

Young Mother

Christine Abbott

May

Geraldine Ward

Tracey

William Ash

Joe

Matthew Clucas

Sean

Anna Jaskolka

Shop Assistant

Jonathan James

Tansey

Anthony Bodell

Ted

Bob Mullane

Ted's Mate

Jack Marsden

Mike

Jimmy Coleman

Dixie

George Moss

Dean

Jackie Richmond

Club Steward

Tony Little

Cliff

Derek Alleyn

Factory Boss

Tracey Adamson

Anthony Audenshaw

Gloria Bodell

Graham Cooke

Susan Cookson

Cissie Clark

Samantha Elka

Donna Elson

Katherine Falvey

Linda Harris

Jacky Hamilton

Corinne Heritage

Gary Hesford

Ricky Livid

Stephen Lord

Tommy Maine

Anne Martin

John Merman

Eric Noi

Lesley Rae Bancs

Cindy Shaw

James Shaw

Tony Smyles

Ken Strath

Jacky Taylor

Janice Taylor

Anthony Ward

Patrick Ward

Sheila Weir

Vince Williams

Kevin Wright

8,153 feet

91 minutes

Bob and Tommy, two middle-aged family men, both unemployed, attempt to augment their dole money by rustling a sheep from the moors near their Lancashire home. They get their sheep, but the ploy ends in disaster. As the men are trying to sell the meat round the pubs, Bob's beaten-up but utterly necessary van gets stolen.

Bob's seven-year-old daughter Coleen has reached the age at which girls of good Catholic families take their first Communion. To buy a com-

plete Communion outfit costs around £200, and Bob is determined to earn the money somehow. He tries rodding drains, but nobody is interested, except for the kindly parish priest, Father Barry, who automatically assumes that Bob is doing the job for nothing. Bob tries working as a bouncer in the local rave club, but blows that job on his first night. Desperate, he finally borrows money from a loan company to buy a new van, telling his wife that the money has come from a win on the horses.

Unknown to Bob, however, his loan company has written him off as a bad debt, selling on the debt to a ruthless shark, who comes round to Bob's house and terrorises his wife Anne. Enraged, Bob staggers off to find the man, an iron bar hidden in his coat. He watches him get drunk in a bar, then follows him to a multi-storey car park. After a brief fight, the man gets in his car to drive away, but is so drunk that he crashes into a pillar, dying instantly.

Bob rushes to confess to Father Barry, who tells him not to feel guilty, and on no account to confess his involvement to either his wife or the police. Coleen's Communion takes place, with Bob and Anne proudly looking on. Meanwhile, two police officers arrive at Bob's house, and are told by a neighbour that he is at Church. When Tom leaves the church, he is greeted by the policemen, who have come to tell him that his stolen van has been found.

The audience starts laughing to itself right at the beginning of the opening sequence, even before Bob and Tommy get going on the sheep-shagging jokes. Is the sight of two less-than-fit middle-aged men chasing an unfortunate animal really that funny? Has it something to do with the comic bearing of Ricky Tomlinson, the round, droll figure we all remember from his hilarious naked-in-a-bath scene in Ken Loach's *Riff Raff*? Well, yes, maybe, on both counts. But the laughter that greets *Raining Stones* is mainly about a different sort of glee. People laugh along with *Raining Stones*, even before it's started, because it is a Ken Loach film above all else.

Loach's position in British film-making is unique. He is just about the only director who started working in the wake of the Free Cinema epoch still to be making films in Britain, and he is certainly the only one to have remained faithful to Free Cinema's commitment to realism as a rich and creative cinematic form. He is an unwavering, outspokenly committed socialist, which makes him unusual not only in film-making circles, but in any sphere of Britain's contemporary public life. He is one of only two big British film-makers to make a point of telling everyday stories about working-class people living their lives in difficult – but unexceptionally so – circumstances. Thus the laughter which automatically greets this film is a sort of cheer to a man whom the audience finds brave and admirable.

But the laughter also signifies anticipation, and a curious sort of relief. Although you wouldn't know it to look at most of our media, the majority of the British population is still, if not entirely working-class, then of working-class origin. To the majority of Loach's prospective audience, council estates are not weird wastelands, but places known intimately and remembered with affection, as home. To the majority of this audience, poverty is not merely an abstract problem read about in the newspapers, but the stuff of life itself. Yet our media starves us of images which reflect and recognise everyday economic truth. The laughter which greets *Raining Stones* is a way of thanking the film for offering to give us what we're due.

It is hardly Loach's fault that these expectations are so inappropriately huge. It is also not his fault that critics, as a result, have tended to over-rate his recent work. It is only very slightly his problem that the crux around which the plot of *Raining Stones* revolves bears a passing resemblance to that of another film in which a poverty-stricken family man gets involved in dodgy dealings, suffering a humiliation made all the worse by its being in the sight of his beloved wife and child. Nobody's asking Loach to make a film as operatic, as enormous, as shamelessly pathetic, as *Bicycle Thieves*. But it really is a shame that Loach has chosen to direct what could have been an enthrallingly sweeping script in a way that makes everything big in it seem trivial and slight.

Though a bit weak on really funny dialogue, Jim Allen's script is basically fine. The central male performances – from Bruce Jones as Bob and Ricky Tomlinson as Tommy – are also fine. There are many places in the film where an energetic director could have taken all these fine things and pushed

them on to the point of greatness. But the film is visually boring, a succession of weakly framed shots which could have been constructed to prove that there is nothing interesting to look at in the places where poor people live. Stewart Copeland's music is dreadful tinkly synthesiser mush, as if designed to kill whatever passion might rear its head.

Although women are not a focal point of this story, the audience really has to believe in Bob's love for his wife and daughter, otherwise everything that's going on is bound to fall apart. But although Julie Brown and Gemma Phoenix appear to live in the same flat as Bob does, both seem to act and react only to the camera, not to the man supposed to be their husband and dad. As Brown and Phoenix are not film actors by profession, this amateurism is maybe not surprising. But Loach should have known how to put this right.

Raining Stones is a lacklustre, undramatic piece of film-making. The only point at which it really gets going is towards the end, when the good priest exculpates Bob for abetting the death of a brutal loan-shark. According to scriptwriter Jim Allen, the Church is a powerful, but ultimately futile, focus of working-class culture; he disagrees with it, but recognises the solace it gives too much to be able to mock it. By presenting the priest as the only person of any particular stature in the film, *Raining Stones* seems by omission to collude with this situation. This is a peculiar statement for a bunch of Marxists to make. And it provides a shockingly sentimental ending to a film which, for most of its running time, seems so afraid of appearing sentimental that it prefers to run the risk of evoking practically no deep feeling whatsoever.

Jenny Turner



Down the drain: Bruce Jones

Rising Sun

USA 1993

Director: Philip Kaufman

Certificate

18

Distributor

20th Century Fox

Production Company

20th Century Fox

Executive Producer

Sean Connery

Producer

Peter Kaufman

Line Producer

Ian Bryce

Production Co-ordinator

Susan Robbins Newirth

Unit Production Manager

Ian Bryce

Location Managers

Jim McCabe

John Panzarella

Casting

Donna Isaacson

Associates:

Julie Hutchinson

Lisa Clarkson

Assistant Directors

Matthew Carlisle

Frank Davis

Lucille Ouyang

Screenplay

Philip Kaufman

Michael Crichton

Michael Backes

Based on the novel by

Michael Crichton

Director of Photography

Michael Chapman

Colour

DeLuxe

Additional Photography

Jamie Anderson

John Connor Snr

Camera Operator

Michael A. Genne

Steadicam Operator

Randy Nolan

Video

Supervisor:

K.C. Hodenfield

Effects Editor:

Craig Price

Special Visual Effects

Industrial Light

& Magic

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Mark A.Z. Dippe

Producer:

Gail Currey

Art Director:

Ty Ruben Ellingson

Editor:

Dan McNamara

Harry Artists:

Jimi Simmons

Jonathan Keaton

Concept Artist

Benton Jew

Computer Graphics

Co-ordinator

Nancy Jill Luckoff

Editors

Stephen A. Rotter

William S. Scharf

Production Designer

Dean Tavoularis

Art Director

Angelo Graham

Set Design

Peter Kelly

Robert Goldstein

Set Decorator

Gary Fettes

Special Effects Supervisor

Larry L. Fuentes

Special Effects

Jim Schwalm

Steven Purcell

Music

Toru Takemitsu

Additional:

Richard Marriott

Music Editors

Alan Splet

Jeffrey Stephens

Songs

"Tsunami" by and

performed by Seichi

Tanaka and the San

Francisco Taiko Dojo;

"Don't Fence Me In"

by Cole Porter; "Single

Petal of a Rose" by

Duke Ellington;

"Chattanooga Choo

Choo" by Harry

Warren, Mack Gordon;

"Latin Lingo" by

Lawrence Muggenud,

Louis Freeze, Senen

Reyes, performed by

Cypress Hill;

"Love Shack" by

Frederick Schneider,

Catherine Pierson,

Keith Strickland,

Cindy Wilson,

performed by The

B-52s; "Give Me the

Simple Life" by Josef

Myrow, Harry Ruby;

"How Gone is

Goodbye" by Pam

Tillis, Bob Dipiero,

Jan Buckingham,

performed by

Pam Tillis

Costume Design

Jacqueline West

Costume Supervisor

Bruce R. Hogard

Make-up

Supervisor:

Ve Neill

Artist:

John Blake

Title Design

R/Greenberg Associates

West

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Sound Design

Alan Splet

Sound Editors

Teresa Eckton

Dianna Stirpe

Ewa Sztompke

ADR Supervisor

Hugh Waddell

Foley Supervisor

Robert Shoup

Foley Editor

Jeffrey Kroeber

Sound Recordists

David MacMillan

Music:

Shinji Hori

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Tom Johnson

Richard Beggs

Marian Wallace

Sound Effects Editors

John Verbeck

Ann Kroeber

Frank Eulner

Foley Artist

Dennie Thorpe

Police Technical Advisers

Call the Cops

Special Consultant

Steve Clemons

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jeff Imada

Stunts

Bobby Bass

Janet S. Brady

Eugene Collier

Fumio Demura

Oscar Dillon (Big O')

Shane Dixon

Frank Ferrara

Jack Gill

Buddy Joe Hooker

Brian Imada

Steven Ito

Jeff Jensen

Henry Kingi

Johnny Koy

Tak Kubota

Leo Lee

Roy K. Ogata

Alan Oliney

Denney Pierce
Ronnie Rondell
Bill Ryusaki
Dick Warlock
Danny Wong
Tadashi Yamashita
Dick Ziker

Cast

Sean Connery
John Connor
Wesley Snipes
Web Smith
Harvey Keitel
Tom Graham
Cary-Hiroaki Tagawa
Eddie Sakamura
Kevin Anderson
Bob Richmond
Mako
Yoshida-san
Ray Wise
Senator John Morton
Stan Egi
Ishihara
Stan Shaw
Phillips
Tia Carrere
Jingo Asakuma
Steve Buscemi
Willy "the Weasel"
Wilhelm
Tatjana Patitz
Cheryl Lynn Austin
Peter Crombie
Greg
Sam Lloyd
Rick
Alexandra Powers
Julia
Daniel Von Barga
Chief
Olson/Interrogator
Lauren Robinson
Zelly
Amy Hill
Hsieh
Tom Dahlgren
Jim Donaldson
Clyde Kusatsu
Tanaka
Michael Chapman
Fred Hoffman
Joey Miyashima
Nelson Mashita
Young Japanese
Negotiators
Tamara Tunie
Lauren
Tony Ganos
Doorman Guard
James Oliver Bullock
Jeff
Michael Kinsley
Eleanor Clift
Clarence Page
Pat Choate
TV Panel Members

Steven C. Clemons
Show Moderator
Dan Butler
Ken Shubik
Tylyn John
Redhead
Toshihiro Obata
Guard at Imperial
Arms
Shelley Michelle
Blonde
Michele Ruiz
TV Interviewer
Patricia Ayame Thomson
Accident Reporter
Jeff Imada
Max Kirishima
Eddie Sakamura's
Yakuza
Larry O. Williams Jr
Younger Brother
Scot Anthony Robinson
First Brother
Keith Leon Hickles
Another Brother
Carl A. McGee
Guy at Window
Quincy Adams Jr
Mean Face
Cecil Brown
Big Guy
Meagen Fay
Hamaguri Receptionist
Max Grodenchik
Club Manager
Gunnar Peterson
Valet
Jessica Tuck
Senator Morton's Aide
Masa Watanabe
Japanese Elevator
Guard
Minnie Summers Lindsey
Grandma Otis
Paul Fujimoto
Iwabuchi
Kenji
Tempura Chef
Michael Leopard
Cop
Dennis Ota
Raymond Kitamura
Nakamoto Yakuza
Rita Weibel
Girl at Eddie's Party
Seichi Tanaka
Taiko Drum Master

11,631 feet
129 minutes

During politically contested negotiations to buy US computer company MicroCon, Japanese conglomerate Nakamoto opens its new high-rise HQ in Los Angeles. When the corpse of good-time girl Cheryl Lynn Austin is found in the boardroom during the building's inaugural reception, staff lawyers Ishihara and Richmond insist that the LAPD's Special Services Liaison Unit be brought in to handle the matter sensitively. Detective Web Smith takes it on, guided by the unit's semi-retired expert on Japan, John Connor; their entry is resented by Lt Tom Graham, the crude, xenophobic cop who was first on the scene. Connor realises that Austin's death must have been recorded by security cameras, but finds that the relevant video-disc has been replaced since the incident.

A search of Austin's home reveals that she was a 'gasper' (needing near-asphyxiation to achieve orgasm) and that her lover was playboy Eddie Sakamura, who was at the reception. A few hours later Ishihara provides the missing video-disc, which appears to ►

◀ show that Sakamura had violent sex with Austin and left her dead. But Sakamura evades arrest, crashes his car and dies in the burnt-out wreck. Connor takes the disc to Jingo 'Theresa' Asakuma, a part-Japanese expert on computer imaging, who shows that the images have been altered. Smith is warned that gutter journalist 'The Weasel' is raking up old allegations of corruption against him, and he and Connor are tailed by unknown Japanese heavies. Undaunted, they interview Senator John Morton, who attended the Nakamoto reception and is suddenly withdrawing his opposition to the sale of MicroCon.

But Sakamura was not in the car-crash; he turns up in Smith's home with a back-up copy of the original video-disc. Lt Graham (oddly, accompanied by Ishihara and Japanese thugs) stakes out the building to arrest Sakamura; in the ensuing melee, Sakamura dies and Smith is shot but saved by his bullet-proof vest. The disc shows that Sakamura did enter the boardroom, but only to watch Austin have sex with Senator Morton, who left her unconscious; an unidentifiable man then came in and killed her. Connor faxes images from the disc to Morton, an obvious victim of blackmail, who shoots himself. Smith, Connor and Asakuma barge into the Nakamoto boardroom during the final MicroCon negotiations and play the disc in front of company chairman Yoshida, an old friend of Connor's. The man who panics and runs is Richmond, but he is murdered by Sakamura's vengeful yakuza friends before Smith and Connor can arrest him. Ishihara is sent back to Japan in disgrace; Connor goes off to play golf with Yoshida; and Smith flirts with Asakuma while driving her home – only to discover that her address is the same as Connor's.

● Michael Crichton's 'ethno-thriller' novel had three main things going for it. First, the way it used its pessimism about America's future as the foundation for a polemic:

calling American industry to arms in the 'war' against Japan and citing a small library of writing by revisionist economists in support of its attack on Japanese business practices. Second, its technological research, well up to Crichton's past standards; the detailed presentation of digital image-manipulation was the most compulsive element in the book. And third, the fascination of its central ambivalence towards Japanese society and culture: a strange mixture of Japan-bashing and sympathetic explication, which ultimately ran aground on Crichton's debatable assumption that all Japanese have unvarying, Pavlovian responses to all situations, even when based outside Japan. Against these notional pluses must be set such minuses as the extreme ordinariness of the pulp conventions that went into the convoluted plotting and the wearying banality of the approach to characterisation (entire pages of John Connor's dialogue read like paraphrases from 'How to Understand Japan' manuals). But no matter how wretched the writing or confused the author's stance, the book clearly had a core worth exploring.

Amazingly, Philip Kaufman's film version neuters the polemic and discards most of the technological detective work while preserving the cumbersome plot-line and accentuating the laboriousness of the exposition. The movie could stand as a textbook example of how not to get the best out of a pulp novel. Kaufman's changes to the book seem designed to transform it in various ways, but they prove stubbornly unresonant. Turning Smith into a black cop and having him played by Wesley Snipes was surely intended to broaden and complicate the racial issues, but in the event looks like nothing more than politically correct casting; Snipes has little to do, his presence yields nothing about the strained relations between blacks and Asians in Los Angeles and does nothing to lighten the endless, turgid exposition scenes on the freeways in which Connor instructs Smith in Japanese mores.

Similarly, introducing a covert love-interest between Connor and Asakuma adds not a shiver of erotic tension to the plot and the open ending, which raises the possibility that Smith will get off with Asakuma while Connor plays golf, seems like a nonsensical afterthought. The only change that really does alter anything is making Richmond rather than Ishihara the killer – which, of course, fatally weakens the thrust of Crichton's attack on Japanese ruthlessness.

David Mamet did some uncredited work on the final draft of the script, but Kaufman intended to reserve sole script credit for himself (the credit to Crichton and his collaborator Michael Backes, who actually left the project early on, is there as the result of a Writers Guild arbitration). He must therefore take the blame for the long series of misjudgments that vulgarise or trivialise the material and prevent the movie from achieving any credibility even as a generic thriller. These start right under the opening titles, with video images (some of them archly quoted from Kurosawa movies) of Japanese actors playing cowboys, presented as part of a karaoke video; the fact that no karaoke video ever looked remotely like that rather vitiates the intended satire of Japan's infatuation with Americana. And they continue right up to the Z-movie climax, in which a gang of stereotypical Japanese hoods pops up from nowhere to dispatch the villain in quick-drying cement.

Other such low points include the crass invention of an "executive fuck chamber" off the Nakamoto boardroom, two completely gratuitous martial-arts action scenes, the unexplained collaboration of Graham and Ishihara in the murder of Sakamura, and the embarrassing episode in South Central Los Angeles in which Smith jive-talks a group of 'brothers' on the street into delaying a carload of Japanese pursuers. These and many similar misjudgments suggest that the middle-brow Kaufman couldn't hit an authentically populist note if his career depended on it; he's rather like the broadsheet newspaper editor who tried to edit a tabloid and got everything wrong.

On top of all the other problems, the movie's representations of 'Japaneseness' are farcically inadequate. Sean Connery breezes through it all as effortlessly as he has through other recent films, but the character's supposed mastery of the Japanese language becomes a joke as soon as he's required to speak it. The Japanese-American actors who play the emigré characters fare little better, and are wildly unconvincing as Japanese executives. In fact, the only real mystery in the whole movie is the participation of Toru Takemitsu, one of Japan's most distinguished avant-garde composers. Is the perfunctoriness of the actual score perhaps Takemitsu's comment on the movie that he unwisely contracted to write for?

Tony Rayns

Sleepless in Seattle

USA 1993

Director: Nora Ephron

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production Company

TriStar Pictures

Executive Producers

Lynda Obst

Patrick Crowley

Producer

Gary Foster

Associate Producers

Delia Ephron

Jane Bartelme

James W. Skotchdopole

Production Supervisor

New York:

Jane Raab

Production Co-ordinators

Mitchell Dauterive

Chicago:

Terry Clemmons

Baltimore:

Alison Sherman

New York:

Debra Tanklow

Unit Production Manager

Patrick Crowley

Location Managers

Dow Griffith

New York:

Amy Herman

Post-production

Supervisor

Paul A. Levin

Casting

Juliet Taylor

Associate:

Laura Rosenthal

Seattle:

Jodi Rothfield

Katie Ryan

Assistant Directors

James W. Skotchdopole

Donald J. Lee Jnr

Maggie Murphy

Screenplay

Nora Ephron

David S. Ward

Jeff Arch

Story

Jeff Arch

Director of Photography

Sven Nykvist

Colour

Technicolor

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

Marty Oppenheimer

Baltimore:

David Wagreich

Camera Operator

Kevin Jewison

Steadicam Operators

Randy Nolen

Baltimore:

Larry McConkey

Visual Effects

Balsmeyer & Everett

Visual Effects Supervisor

New York:

Rick Fichter

Editor

Robert Reitano

Production Designer

Jeffrey Townsend

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Wendy Skerritt

Art Director

Seattle/Chicago:

Gershon Ginsburg

Baltimore/New York:

Charley Beal

Set Design

Charled Daboub Jnr

Set Decorators

Clay Griffith

Baltimore:

Becky Weidner

New York:

Roberta Holinko

Key Set Dressers

Michael Moran

Mary Buri

Production Illustrator

Daren Dochterman

Chargeman Scenic Artist

Steven Eyrse

Storyboard Artist

Brick Mason

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Robert M. Riggs

Music/Music Producer

Marc Shaiman

Music Supervisors

Marc Shaiman

Nicholas Meyers

Music Editor

Nicholas Meyers

Music Consultant

Jeffrey Pollack

Songs

"When I Fall in Love"

by Edward Heyman,

Victor Young,

performed by Celine

Dion, Clive Griffin;

"Take Me Out to the

Ballgame" by Jack

Norworth, Albert Von

Tilzer; "As Time Goes

By" by Herman

Hupfeld; "Make

Someone Happy"

by Betty Comden,

Adolph Green, Jule

Styne, performed

by Jimmy Durante;

"Sleigh Ride" by Leroy

Anderson, Mitchell

Parish; "Jingle Bells"

by J. Pierpont

performed by Roy

Rogers, Dale Evans;

"We Wish You a Merry

Christmas"; "Over the

Rainbow" by Harold

Arlen, E.Y. Harburg,

performed by Ray

Charles; "Jeepers

Creepers" by Harry

Warren, Johnny

Mercer; "Auld Lang

Syne" performed

by Guy Lombardo and

His Royal Canadians;

"Stardust" by Hoagy

Carmichael, Mitchell

Parish, performed by

Nat King Cole; "Makin'

Whoopee" by Walter

Donaldson, Gus Kahn,

performed by Dr John,

Rickie Lee Jones; "In

the Wee Small Hours

of the Morning"

by David Mann, Bob

Hilliard; performed

by Carly Simon; "Back

in the Saddle Again"

by Gene Autry, Ray

Whitley, performed

by Gene Autry; "An

Affair to Remember"

by Harry Warren,

Harold Adamson,

Leo McCarey; "The

Proposal" by Hugo W.

Friedhofer; "Bye Bye

Blackbird" by Ray

Henderson, Mort

Dixon, performed by

Joe Cocker; "A Wink

and a Smile" by Marc

Shaiman, Ramsey

McLean, performed

by Harry Connick Jnr;

"Empire State

Montage" by Hugo W.

Friedhofer; "Stand By

Your Man" by Billy

Sherrill, Tammy

Wynette, performed

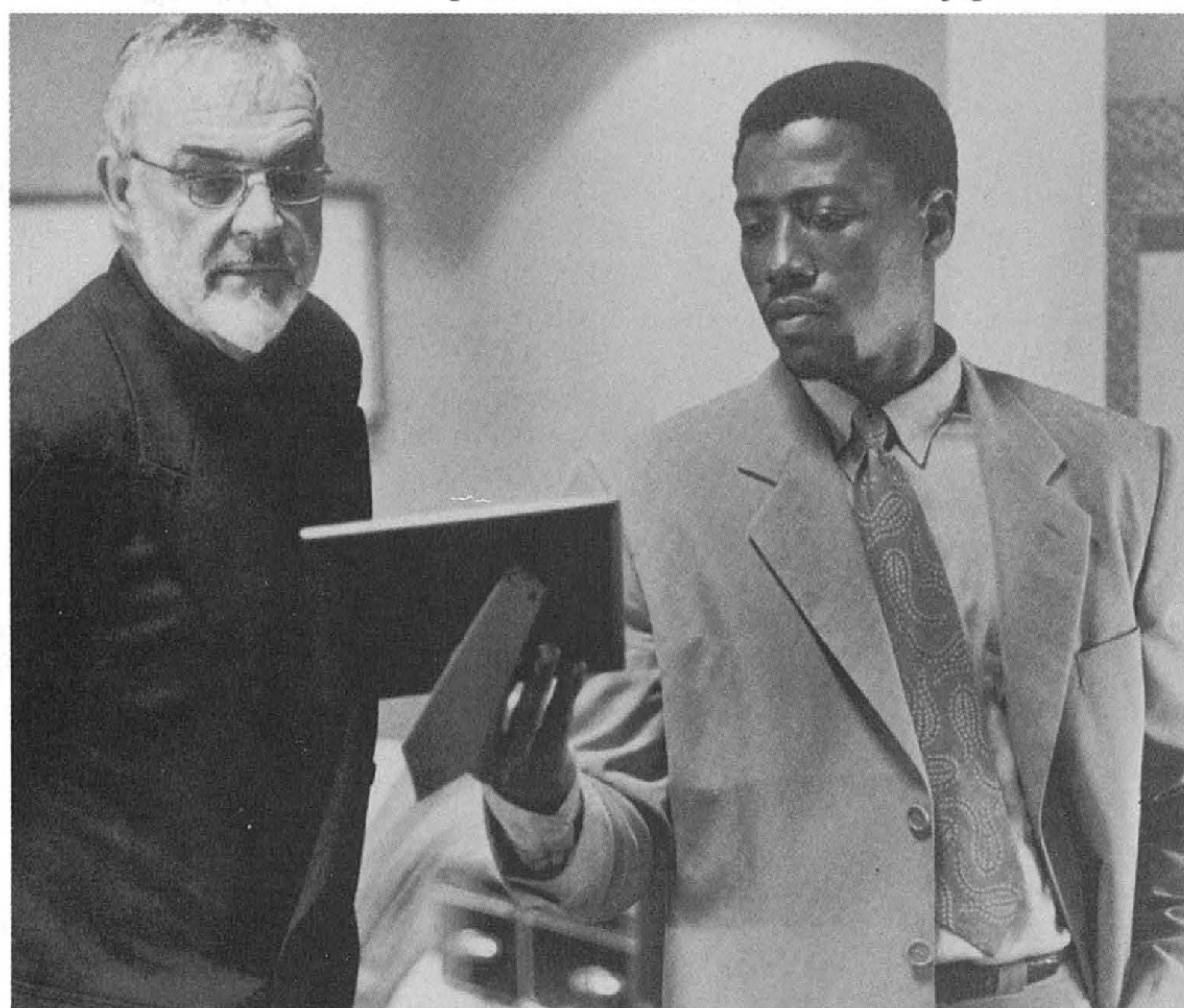
by Tammy Wynette;

"A Kiss to Build a

Dream On" by Bert

Kalmer, Harry Ruby,

Oscar Hammerstein II,



Karaoke cowboys: Sean Connery, Wesley Snipes

performed by Louis Armstrong
Costume Design
 Judy Ruskin
Make-up Artists
 Leonard Engelman
 Key:
 Sharon Ilson
Title Design
 Walter Bernard
 Milton Glaser
Titles
 Main:
 Balsmeyer & Everett
 End:
 VCE Inc
Supervising Sound Editor
 Michael Kirchberger
Sound Editors
 Bitty O'Sullivan Smith
 Dan Korintus
 Louis Bertini
 Stan Bochner
 Ira Spiegel
ADR Editor
 Harriet Fidlow Winn
Sound Recordist
 Kirk Francis
 Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordist
 Lee Dichter
Production Consultant
 Nord Haggerty
Stunt Co-ordinator
 Conrad Palmisano
Stunts
 Barbara Klein
 Bruce Barbour
 Dick Hancock
 Conrad Palmisano
 Rick Seaman
Helicopter Pilot
 Al Cerullo
Film extract
An Affair to Remember
 (1957)

Cast
 Tom Hanks
 Sam Baldwin
 Meg Ryan
 Annie Reed
 Ross Malinger
 Jonah Baldwin
 Rita Wilson
 Suzy
 Victor Garber
 Greg
 Tom Riis Farrell
 Rob
 Carey Lowell
 Maggie Baldwin
 Bill Pullman
 Walter
 Le Clanche Du Rand
 Barbara Reed
 Kevin O'Morrison
 Cliff Reed
 David Hyde Pierce
 Dennis Reed
 Valerie Wright
 Betsy Reed
 Frances Conroy
 Irene Reed

Tom Tammi
 Harold Reed
 Calvin Trillin
 Uncle Milton
 Caroline Aaron
 Doctor Marcia
 Fieldstone
 Linda Wallem
 Loretta
 La Tanya Richardson
 Harriet
 Rosie O'Donnell
 Becky
 Tom McGowan
 Keith
 Stephen Mollor
 Wyatt
 Marguerite Schertle
 Baltimore Waitress
 Dana Ivey
 Claire
 Brian McConnachie
 Bob
 Rob Reiner
 Jay
 Gaby Hoffmann
 Jessica
 Matt Smith
 Mailman
 Amanda Maher
 Clarise
 Barbara Garrick
 Victoria
 Victor Morris
 Seattle Maitre D'
 Philip Mihalaki
 Seattle Waiter
 Donald J. Lee Jr
 Seattle Detective
 Mary A. Kelly
 Nervous Woman
 on Airplane
 Diane Sokolow
 Tiffany Saleswoman
 Hannah Cox
 Jessica's Mother
 Rich Hawkins
 Jessica's Father
 Tamera Plank
 Stewardess
 Mike Badalucco
 Jeff Mazzola
 New York Taxi
 Despatchers
 Philip Levy
 Taxi Driver
 Julie Janney
 Cynthia
 Tony Zazula
 Maitre D'
 John Boylan
 Robert Livingston
 Elevator Men
 Bruce Stevenson
 Valet
 Sidney Armus
 Information
 Booth Man

9,444 feet
 105 minutes



Wee small hours: Ross Malinger, Tom Hanks

and a private investigation service. She writes a letter to Sam, but throws it in the bin. She flies to Seattle, where she gets as far as saying hello to the man of her dreams. But then she loses her nerve and returns to Baltimore determined to marry Walter.

Meanwhile, Sam has tried dating a colleague, Victoria, but Jonah disapproves. Jonah likes the sound of Annie, whose letter suggesting a rendezvous on top of the Empire State Building on the evening of Valentine's Day has, unbeknown to her, been rescued and sent on by her girlfriend. Jonah writes back to Annie agreeing to keep the date, but Sam refuses to have anything to do with this plan. Jonah runs away to make the tryst and Sam is forced to follow his son to New York. Over dinner in the Rockefeller Plaza on their Valentine's Day trip, Annie explains to Walter her worries about "magic", and tells him about her fantasy relationship with "Sleepless in Seattle". Ever understanding, Walter gives her up. Meanwhile, Sam has found Jonah cowering in a corner as the sky around the Empire State Building darkens. Annie rushes straight to the elevator, and is just in time to meet Sam and Jonah, who have come back up to look for Jonah's rucksack which the wily boy has left behind.

It's a strange thing about these latter-day classic romantic comedies. I adored Cher being Italian in *Moonstruck* – when the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that's amore! – but I know plenty of people who did not. Conversely, although the Nora Ephron-scripted *When Harry Met Sally...* was one of the biggest hits of 1990, I hated it. As this had a lot to do with Ephron's sense of humour and with Meg Ryan as the female lead, the *Sleepless* experience did not work for me.

These comedies tell you they are classics even before they have properly begun. This they do by featuring old songs on the soundtrack, meant to

make you all dewy-eyed. Accordingly, *Sleepless* starts off with "As Time Goes By", in an appropriately painful and constipated version from Jimmy Durante. Meanwhile, the visuals trot out those big classic-movie tropes, the monumental cityscape and the imaging of America as the great big country. Chicago, Seattle, Baltimore and New York are represented not as places, but as metropolitan icons. The distances between them are visualised by a sweeping computer-generated map. This is a movie for all those lonely people out there.

Non-classic films are at liberty to make up for what is lacking in the script, acting or whatever by pumping up the *mise en scène*. Classic romantic comedies, however, are meant to be tasteful and understated to make us warm to their situations. We are clearly meant to find Meg Ryan's hideously tapisseried boudoir, Tom Hanks' drab Habitatty bungalow – a male-only environment signalled by an amazing preponderance of angle-poise lamps – touching. And Ryan herself, with her perpetually smudged eyeliner, dingy clothes and uncomic over-acting, is probably intended to be cute.

On the good side, Tom Hanks is excellent. He has a meaty, surprisingly menacing voice and presence, which cuts through the sentimentality of his lines, making for a handful of genuinely funny interchanges. For example, considering dating a woman for the first time since he met his wife: "What happens if I take her out to dinner?" "You'll find out about tiramisu." "What the hell's tiramisu? You mean, we'll be in bed together and she'll be expecting me to do this thing, and I don't even know what it is!" Ross Malinger, who plays Jonah, is also impressive. Stolid, sullen and relentlessly uncute, his performance is a refreshing alternative to the Macaulay Culkin school of child acting.

Jenny Turner

Stepping Razor – Red X

Canada 1992

Director: Nicholas Campbell

Certificate
 18
Distributor
 Feature Film Company
Production Company
 Bush Doctor Films
Executive Producers
 Syd Cappe
 Nicolas Stiliadis
Co-executive Producer
 Wayne Jobson
Producer
 Edgar Egger
Production Executives
 John Fremes
 Linda Grinbaum
 David Korchok
Production Controller
 Pramod Malhotra
Production Co-ordinator
 Steve Arroyave
Screenplay
 Nicholas Campbell
Director of Photography
 Edgar Egger
Colour
 Fuji
Additional Photography
 Mark Hoffman
 Jeff Blaubert
 Max Earl
 Paul Boucher
Opticals
 Film Effects
Editor
 Trevor Ambrose
Art Director
 Bora Bulajic
Music Editor
 Byron McCulloch
Songs

"Dracula", "Bombo Klaat", "Here Comes the Judge", "Dog's Teeth", "Creation", "Lesson in My Life", "Apartheid (Inamalan)", "Stand Firm", "Fool's Die", "Not Gonna Give it Up", "Rastafari Is", "Pick Myself Up", "You Can't Blame the Youth", "Equal Rights", "Legalise It", "Comin' in Hot", "Bukin Hamm Palace", "Downpressor Man", "Stop That Train", "Babylon Burning", "Burial", "African" by Peter Tosh; "Anti-apartheid" by Livingston, Peter Tosh; "Don't Look Back" by Robinson, White;

"Reggae Heaven" by E. Harrison, K. Dixon; "One Love", "Concrete Jungle" by Bob Marley; "It Hurts to Be Alone" by Draithwaite; "Igziabeher" by Peter Tosh, L. Jaffe; "Stepping Razor" by J. Higgs; "Johnny B Goode" by Chuck Berry; "Get Up Stand Up" by Peter Tosh, Bob Marley; "Rastaman Chant" (traditional); "Dr Fish" (traditional); "Livin' on Streetside" (traditional); "Zion Groaning"; "Pukkuman Chant"; "Junior Delgado"; "Something Good is Going to Happen" (traditional); "Lord's Prayer"

Make-up
 Judy Murdoch
Sound Editor
 Paul Durand
Sound Recordists
 Jack Buchanan
 Allen Ormerod
 Andy Koyama
 Foley Recordist:
 Steve Copely
 Ultra stereo
Sound Effects Editors
 Tim Roberts
 Jeremy MacLaverty
Foley Artist
 Gary DaPrato

Cast
 Lloyd "Rocky" Allen
 Edward "Bigs" Allen
 Andrea Davis
 Rab Leon
 Ron Headley
 Roy Garrick
 Jahbi
 Junior
 Kenile
 Rabta Steve
 Gary Isaacs
 Lawrence Mabcoe
 Beresford Thompson
 Sandra Dklor
 Thunder
 Sister P
 Sister Margaret
 Bruce "Preacher" Robinson

9,339 feet
 104 minutes

Imaginative recreations of events in the life of reggae singer Peter Tosh – murdered at his home in 1987 – are intercut with documentary footage of his stage performances, and interviews with the singer, his associates and family. Much of the soundtrack is composed of Tosh's own tapes. Before his death, Tosh was assembling material for an autobiography, and dictated his memories, tales and thoughts onto tapes he called the 'Red X tapes': he claimed that, whenever he saw his name on any official document, it was always followed by a red cross – sure sign, he felt, that he was a marked man.

Reggae has long exercised a peculiar fascination for white non-Jamaican audiences. The lopsided rhythms, the messianic politics ►

Chicago. Sam Baldwin's beloved wife has just died, leaving him to bring up Jonah, his eight-year-old son, single-handed. Depressed, Sam decides to move with his son to a new life in Seattle. 18 months later, Annie Reed, a Baltimore journalist, celebrates her engagement to Walter with her parents over a Christmas Eve dinner. Though allergic to everything, Walter is a nice man; he is also very rich. Annie is happy about the arrangement – until a conversation with her mother gives her the idea that a true romance should have some "magic". Later that night, Jonah rings up a radio agony phone-in to find a new wife for his father. The agony aunt draws Sam into the conversation and Annie, listening in her car, falls in love with his voice. She pursues her obsession from her Baltimore office, where her job allows her access to confidential databases

◀ couched in Biblical rhetoric, and especially the gigantic spliffs stuffed with mind-numbingly strong ganja: all these have seemed to promote a rebel culture that mixes hedonism and radicalism without compromise. Whether that version of reggae accurately reflects the music's real history is another matter.

Nicholas Campbell's film adds another ingredient to this romantic view: conspiracy theories, the last refuge of the disaffected radical. On September 11, 1987, three armed men burst into Tosh's house, forced the singer, his wife and their guests to lie on the floor and demanded money. Angered by the small amount they were offered, the gunmen beat and shot their victims. Tosh and two others died. The police later arrested a man they claimed was one of the murderers: he is now on Death Row in Kingston, although he protests his innocence. Nobody has ever been arrested in connection with the murders.

Tosh's militant Rastafarian beliefs had won him many enemies, as had his forceful personality. He was convinced that the Jamaican police and government were out to get him, and this fear, real or imagined, set the tone for the Red X tapes. Those tapes take up a large part of the film's soundtrack, which endorses Tosh's acute sense of persecution with some conspiracy theories of its own. Dramatised material and documentary footage form a portrait of a man whose self-belief was simultaneously a barrier and a bridge. Tosh may never have achieved the status of his one-time collaborator Bob Marley, but his dissident voice left its mark on reggae and on black culture.

No doubt Peter Tosh had his enemies in Jamaica, although *Stepping Razor* - Red X adduces nothing but anecdotal evidence: a chance remark from a colleague here, an insinuation from a friend there. Facts would be an encumbrance. What concerns Campbell more is the edgy paranoia which conspiracy theory promotes, and which seems to match reggae's nervous rhythmic twitch. Not that the film offers us that much music: perhaps it's a problem of performing rights, but whenever we get some of Tosh's music, the camera inevitably cuts away and the soundtrack fades. It's as if Campbell fears the accusation that all he's really interested in is a reggae soundtrack.

Nor is there much evidence of Jamaica as such. A few familiar shantytown images, the inevitable dreadlocks and ganja clouds: Kingston is present, not a substance, but as a sequence of postcard images of poverty. Similarly, Bob Marley, more significant than Tosh in almost every way, and an *éminence grise* dogging every step of Tosh's career, is barely glimpsed.

That's the problem with conspiracy theorists: they prefer shadows to fully-formed images. For all the stridency of his ideas and of his music, Peter Tosh remains a phantom beyond this film's grasp.

Nick Kimberley

This Boy's Life

USA 1993

Director: Michael Caton-Jones

Certificate

15

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Warner Bros

Executive Producers

Peter Guber

Jon Peters

Producer

Art Linson

Co-producer

Fitch Cady

Production Associate

Patti Roberts Nelson

Production Co-ordinators

Penny Gibbs

Yvonne Melville

Unit Production Managers

Casey Grant

Utah:

Don Hauer

Location Managers

James Sallis

Washington:

Mike Fantasia

Utah:

Arlene Sibley

Casting

Owens Hill

Rachel Abrams

Canada:

Stuart Atkins

Assistant Directors

Bill Westley

Paul Etherington

Rachel Leiterman

Lynda M. Gilman

Peter Hirsch

Kevin Speckmaier

Sharon Gerhard

Screenplay

Robert Getchell

Based on the book by

Tobias Wolff

Director of Photography

David Watkin

Colour

Technicolor

Camera Operators

Michael Roberts

B:

Dave Owen

Editors

Jim Clark

Associate:

Peter N. Lonsdale

Production Designer

Stephen J. Lineweaver

Art Director

Sandy Cochrane

Set Decorator

Jim Erickson

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Mike Vezina

Special Effects

Nick Lawson

Music

Carter Burwell

Music Director/

Orchestrations

Sonny Kompanek

Music Supervisor

Allan Mason

Music Editor

Adam Milo Smalley

Songs

"Let's Get Away From It

All" by Tom Adair, Matt

Dennis, performed by

Frank Sinatra; "Blue

Monday" by Dave

Bartholomew, Antoine

Domino, performed

by Fats Domino; "I'm

Not a Juvenile

Delinquent" by Morris

Levy, performed by

Frankie Lymon and

The Teenagers; "Smile"

by Charles Chaplin,

John Turner, Geoffrey

Parsons, performed

by Nat King Cole;

"Summertime Blues",

"C'mon Everybody"

by Eddie Cochran,

Jerry Capehart,

performed by Eddie

Cochran; "Twitchy"

by Willie Joe Duncan,

performed by Rene

Hall Orchestra, Willie

Joe; "Real Wild Child"

by Johnny O'Keefe,

Johnny Greenan, Dave

Owens, performed

by Ivan; "Bye Bye Love"

by Boudleaux Bryant,

Felice Bryant,

performed by The

Everly Brothers;

"Perfidia" by Alberto

Dominguez,

performed by The

Ventures; "Mi casa su

casa" by Al Hoffman,

Dick Manning, "Magic

Moments" by Hal

David, Burt Bacharach,

performed by Perry

Como; "Bongo Rock"

by Preston Epps,

Arthur Egnoian,

performed by Preston

Epps; "The World is

Waiting For the

Sunrise" by Eugene

Lockhart, Ernest Seitz,

performed by Les Paul,

Mary Ford; "Rawhide"

by Milton Grant, Fred

L. Wray, performed

by Link Wray and the

Wraymen; "You Belong

To Me" by Pee Wee

King, Redd Stewart,

Chilton Price,

performed by Gene

Vincent; "I'm Sorry"

by Ronnie Self, Dub

Allbritten, performed

by Brenda Lee; "Teach

Me Tonight" by Sammy

Cahn, Gene de Paul,

performed by The De

Castro Sisters;

"Moonlight Bay" by

Percy Wenrich, Edward

Madden; "Because" by

Edward Tschemacher,

Guy d'Hardelot; "I'm

Gonna Wash That Man

Right Outa My Hair"

by Richard Rodgers,

Oscar Hammerstein II;

"Laughing Polka"

by Myron Floren,

Curt Ramsey

Costume Design

Richard Hornung

Wardrobe

Men:

Tom Pankiewicz

Women:

Nicola Ryall

Make-up Artist

Jo-Anne Smith Ojeil

Title Design

Robert Dawson

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editor

Richard King

Sound Editors

Sukey Fontelieu

Jane Carpenter-Wilson

Simon Coke

Supervising ADR Editor

Cliff Latimer

ADR Editor

Holly Huckins

Foley Editors

Christopher Flick

Christine Danelski

E. Jeane Putnam

Sound Recordist

Rob Young

Foley Recordist

Gary Hecker

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Donald O. Mitchell

Frank A. Montano

Michael Herbick

Sound Effects Editors

Martin Maryska

John Benson

Sound Effects

Eric Potter

Foley Artists

Tim Chilton

Jill Schachne

Stunt Co-ordinator

Betty Thomas

Stunts

Gary McLarty

John Polce

Charles Andre

Mike Langlois

Kevin J. Andruschak

Betty Thomas

John Scott

Fred Perron

David Jacox

Jim Dunn

Cole McLarty

Fred Waugh

Ric Waugh

Cotton Mather

Matt Johnson

Tom Eirikson

Marcia Holley

Cast

Robert De Niro

Dwight Hansen

Ellen Barkin

Caroline Wolff

Leonardo DiCaprio

Toby

Jonah Blechman

Arthur Gayle

Eliza Dushku

Pearl

Chris Cooper

Roy

Carla Gugino

Norma

Zack Ansley

Skipper

Tracey Ellis

Kathy

Kathy Kinney

Marian

Bobby Zamoski

Arch Cook

Tobey Maguire

Chuck Bolger

Tristan Tait

Jerry Huff

Travis MacDonald

Psycho

Richard Liss

A & P Manager

Michael Bacall

Terry Taylor

Adam Sneller

Terry Silver

Gerrit Graham

Mr Howard

Thomas Kopache

Geiger Counter Vendor

Lee Wilkof

Principal Shippy

Sean Murphy

Jimmy Voorhees

Jason Horst

Oscar Booker

Deanna Milligan

Morgan Brayton

Silver Sisters

Robert Munns

Ticket Seller

Bill Dow

What's Love Got to Do With It

USA 1993

Director: Brian Gibson

Certificate

18
Distributor
 Buena Vista
Production Company
 Touchstone Pictures
Executive Producers
 Roger Davies
 Mario Iscovich
Producers
 Doug Chapin
 Barry Krost
Co-producer
 Pat Kehoe
Production Supervisor
 Michele Weisler
Production Co-ordinator
 Linda Folsom
Unit Production Manager
 Pat Kehoe
Location Managers
 Richard Davis
 Jody Hummer
Casting
 Reuben Cannon
 & Associates
 Associate:
 David Giella
 Voice:
 Barbara Harris
Assistant Directors
 Barry Thomas
 Sandra Middleton
 Hilbert Hakim
 Michael Winter
 Kimberly J. Sizemore
 Rebecca Strickland
Screenplay
 Kate Lanier
 Based on the book
I, Tina by Tina Turner,
 Kurt Loder
Director of Photography
 Jamie Anderson
Colour
 Technicolor
Camera Operator
 Conrad W. Hall
Editors
 Stuart Pappé
 Film:
 Dave Rawlins
 Michael J. Hill
 Thomas G. Finnan
Production Designer
 Stephen Altman
Art Director
 Richard Johnson
Set Decorator
 Rick Simpson
Set Dresser
 David Ronan
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
 James K. Fredburg
Music
 Stanley Clarke
Music Directors
 William Kidd
 George Del Barrio
Music Performed by
 Guitar Solos:
 Michael Thompson
 Drums:
 Curt Bisquera
 Keyboards:
 C.J. Vanston
 Trumpet:
 Lee Thornburg
 Guitar:
 James Ralston
 Tim Pierce
 Gene Bloch
 Bass:
 Bob Feit
 Sax/Keyboards:
 Timmy Cappello
Orchestrations
 William Kidd
 George Del Barrio
Music Supervisor
 Daniel Allan Carlin
On-camera Musicians
Supervisor
 Sid James

Music Editors

Charles Martin-Inouye
 Jeff Carso
Song Production
Co-ordinator
 Tony DeFranco
Songs
 "Tina's Wish" by Ike
 Turner, Tina
 Turner, "A Fool in Love"
 by Ike Turner, "Rock
 Me Baby" by B.B. King,
 Joe Josea, "It's Gonna
 Work Out Fine" by
 Sylvia McKinney, Rose
 McCoy, "Shake A Tail
 Feather" by Verlie Rice,
 Otis Hayes, Andre
 Williams, "Proud
 Mary" by John C.
 Fogerty, "Nutbush City
 Limits" by Tina Turner,
 "Disco Inferno" by
 Leroy Green, Tyrone G.
 Kersey, "I Might Have
 Been Queen" by
 Jeanette Obsto, Rupert
 Hine, James West-
 Oram, "Why Must We
 Wait Until Tonight?"
 by Bryan Adams,
 Robert John Lange,
 "I Don't Wanna Fight"
 by Steve DuBerry, Lulu
 Lawrie, Billy Lawrie,
 "What's Love Got To Do
 With It" by Terry
 Britten, Graham Lyle,
 all performed by Tina
 Turner; "Rocket 88"
 by Jackie Brenston,
 performed by Laurence
 Fishburne; "(Darlin')
 You Know I Love You"
 by B.B. King, Jules
 Taub, performed by
 Tina Turner, Laurence
 Fishburne; "This Little
 Light of Mine"
 (traditional); "(We're
 Gonna) Jump For Joy",
 "Love, Oh Careless
 Love" by Joe Turner,
 performed by Big Joe
 Turner; "Those Lonely
 Lonely Nights" by John
 Vincent, performed
 by Johnny "Guitar"
 Watson; "I Only Want
 To Be With You" by
 Mike Hawker, Ivor
 Raymonde, performed
 by Dusty Springfield;
 "Do Wah Diddy Diddy"
 by Jeff Barry, Ellie
 Greenwich, performed
 by Manfred Mann;
 "I Want That Girl"
 by and performed by
 Charles Martin Inouye;
 "River Deep, Mountain
 High" by Jeff Barry,
 Ellie Greenwich, Phil
 Spector, performed
 by Ike & Tina Turner;
 "Summertime Blues"
 by Eddie Cochran,
 Jerry Capehart,
 performed by Blue
 Cheer; "Frankenstein"
 by and performed by
 Edgar Winter; "Move
 It" by David Lindup
Choreography
 Michael Peters
Costume Design
 Ruth Carter
Costume Supervisor
 Hector Morales

Make-up

Design:
 Marietta A. Carter
 Artists:
 Wynona Y. Price
 Geri B. Oppenheim
 Bernadine M. Anderson
 Jane Aull
Hair Design
 Robert L. Stevenson
Title Design
 Deborah Ross
 Film Design
Titles/Opticals
 Cinema Research
 Corporation
Supervising Sound Editor
 John Stacy
Sound Editors
 Jeff Clark
 Dan Thomas
 Dale Johnston
 Allan Bromberg
 Bruce Bell
 Colin Mowat
Supervising ADR Editor
 Jane Carpenter Wilson
Sound Recordists
 Arthur Rochester
 Music:
 Allen Sides
 Dan Humann
 Chris Lord-Alge
 Joseph Magee
Foley Recordist
 Marilyn Graf
 Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
 John Reitz
 David Campbell
 Gregg Rudloff
Foley Artists
 James Moriana
 Jeffrey Wilhoit
Technical Adviser
 Bonnie Hamilton
Consultant
 Kurt Loder
Stunt Co-ordinator
 William Washington
Stunts
 Kym Washington
 LaFaye Baker
Animal Wrangler
 Angelo Rivers

Cast

Angela Bassett
 Tina Turner
Laurence Fishburne
 Ike Turner
Vanessa Bell Calloway
 Jackie
Jennifer Lewis
 Zelma Bullock
Phyllis Yvonne Stickney
 Alline Bullock
Khandi Alexander
 Darlene
Rae'ven Kelly
 Young Anna Mae
Virginia Capers
 Choir Mistress
Dorothy Thornton
 Juanita Allen
Natalie Wilson
 David McKinney
Maurice O'Neil
 Monroe Howard
Wakeen Best
Francis Cheathon
 Bell Dawn Best
Billie Barnum
 Jeanne Steele
Cassandra Thames
 Demetrice Cheathon
Helen Marie Lovelace
 Seymour Daniel
Jayd Stanfield
Frank Raspberry
Sericht Roberts
Michelle Jackson
Dena Ellerbee
Maggie McGee
Alfie Silas
Oren Waters
Valetta Barber
 Choir Members
Reverend Emery Shaw
 Organ Player
Cora Lee Day
 Grandma Georgiana
Sherman Augustus
 Reggie
Chi
 Fross
Terrence Riggins
 Spider

Gene "Groove" Allen

Club Announcer
Morris O'Connor
 Larry Washington
Joe Allen
Michael Sessions
L. Van Taylor
 Kings of Rhythm
Jennifer Leigh Warren
Sonya Hensley
Leslie Thurston
Eartha Robinson
 Audience
Kate Lanier
 Stripper on Balcony
Pamala Tyson
 Leanne
Penny Johnson
 Lorraine
Jacqueline Woolsey
 Boutique Clerk
Mayah McCoy
 Young Hairdresser
Barry "Shabaka" Henley
 El Paso Doctor
Michael Colyar
 Apollo Announcer
Rob LaBelle
 Phil Spector
Patricia Sill
 Spector's Assistant
Ronnie Turner
Michael Butler
Greg Cook
Michael Smith
Brian Cayle
Darrel Richards
Walter Davis
 The Revue
Barry O'Neill
Ali Glazer
Julie Phillips
 Kids
Elijah Saleem
 Ike Jnr, age 16
Tyrandis Holmes
 Young Ike Jnr
Jamaine Harrington
 Young Michael
Devon Davison
 Young Ronnie
Eric Thomas
 Young Craig
Bob Kane
 Dance Show Host
Richard T. Jones
 Ike Turner Jnr
Shavar Ross
 Michael Turner
Damon Hines
 Ronnie Turner
Suli McCullough
 Craig Turner
Daniel McDonald
 London Announcer
Wynonna Smith
Rosemarie Jackson
 Ikettes
Michael David Simms
 Ike's Lawyer
John Fink
 Anna's Lawyer
Rudolph Willrich
 Judge
Irene DeBari
 ICU Nurse
Terrance Evans
 Bus Driver
Richard Stay
Nelson Parks
Matt Kirkwood
 Partygoers
Javi Mulero
 Bellhop
Joe Vant
 Hotel Clerk
O'Neal Compton
 Remada Inn Manager
Michael Monks
 Hotel Porter
James Reyne
 Roger Davies
James Ralston
 Guitarist
Timmy Cappello
 Keyboards
Jack Bruno
 Drummer
Bob Feit
 Bass Player
Kenny Moore
 Piano Player
Daniel Allan Carlin
 Conductor
Dean Minerd
 Stage Hand
Fred Ponzlov
 Tom De Carlo

Richard B. Livingston

Louis Mawcinnitt
 Managers
Owen Bush
Herb Muller
David Fresco
 Old Men
Sparkle
Helen Brown
 Old Women
Page Moseley
 Ritz Announcer

Lorna Scott

Nurse
Rick Felkins
 Stage Manager
Robert Lesser
 Fairmount MC

10,579 feet
 118 minutes

Nutbush, Tennessee, the late 40s. Inside the small Baptist church, eight-year-old Anna Mae Bullock is showing a precocity in the song-and-dance department unappreciated by the strait-laced choir mistress. Ejected from choir practice, Anna goes home. She hears her parents fighting. Her mother, Zelma, leaves Anna Mae with her grandmother.

1958: Anna Mae arrives in St Louis to join Zelma and her sister Alline, who works as a barmaid in a club. Anna Mae accompanies her one night and is captivated by the club's headlining act, Ike Turner and the Kings of Rhythm. As a feature of his act, Turner passes a microphone around the women in the audience, who sing and attempt to impress him. On her next visit to the club, Anna Mae exchanges her teenage dress for some vampy clothing, takes Turner's mike and sings. Anna Mae is quickly drawn into Ike's band and recording sessions. He is a perfectionist and hungry for success. Despite Ike's turbulent private life, Anna Mae is nevertheless attracted to him. When his girlfriend botches a suicide attempt, Ike comforts himself by seducing Anna Mae. Soon she is pregnant. "A Fool In Love" - credited to Ike and Tina Turner - plays on the radio and Anna Mae realises that her name has been changed. Ike kidnaps Tina from maternity hospital and takes her and their new-born son to Mexico for a ten-minute wedding. "Fool" is a huge hit in 1960: Ike and Tina are performing to packed houses. They buy a family home; Ike is using cocaine and beating Tina up. More hit records follow. Phil Spector invites Tina to record "River Deep Mountain High" with him in 1966.

Ike's drug-fuelled violence increases. Tina's escape attempts fail. During sessions for her self-penned song "Nutbush City Limits", Ike rapes her. Afterwards, Tina overdoses. Rushed to hospital, Jackie, a former Ikettes backing singer, visits and offers help. Returning home, Tina finds Ike and friends mid-party. Jackie introduces Tina to Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism. Gaining strength from Buddhist chanting, Tina begins to fight back, getting divorced in 1977. Now singing to small-time hotel audiences, Tina is eager to swap her old rhythm and blues for a rockier musical style. Roger Davies, her new manager, organises a new band and new songs. A showcase concert is organised for the New York Ritz. Tina's son warns his mother that Ike plans to shoot her. As she chants in preparation for the Ritz show, Ike enters her dressing room carrying a gun. She faces him down and goes on stage to perform

"What's Love Got To Do With It." A rider tells us that Ike is later imprisoned for drug offences.

Midway through the performance of "What's Love Got To Do With It" during the closing minutes of this film, Angela Bassett's Tina segues into the real Tina Turner. It's a neat, barely perceptible join and a clear indication of how convincing Bassett is. Based on Turner's 1986 autobiography *I, Tina*, this is a superior bio-pic whose great strength lies not only in the performances by Laurence Fishburne as Ike and by Bassett herself, but a loving and detailed recreation of their music and stage routines. For these, Bassett's voice has been dubbed with Turner's own recordings of her early material. Bassett's terpsichorean skills are another matter. She has all of Turner's steamy, wild-style dance steps perfectly emulated, making numbers like "Proud Mary", "A Fool In Love" and "Shake A Tail Feather" seem as fresh as the day they were born.

Turner is today globally famous as a rock singer and actress, but the film touches none of this. Turner's film roles in Ken Russell's *Tommy* (1975) or George Miller's *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* (1985) are ignored in favour of the central relationship between Tina and Ike - mad, bad and dangerous to know - and the story of Tina's gutsy, bloodied - and in the face of the odds - magnificent survival.

Such facts are all part of the legend. Brian Gibson's movie attempts to make sense of them by means of some subtle explorations of the nature of attraction and violence. The one over-riding question - why does Tina put up with Ike when he's beating her within an inch of her life? - is answered with an attention to the complex dynamics at the heart of such abusive relationships.

Accordingly, Bassett does not portray Tina as a weak woman who grows strong, but as a character with her own agenda. The first time that Tina sees the Kings of Rhythm, her girlishness is emphasised by her dress (cardigan) and demeanour (she drinks through a straw). Only her eyes betray her: the numerous close-ups of the urbane, sexualised Ike represent her vision. The subsequent night out sees Tina dressed up for the microphone event. Good enough to assume Ike's vocal lines, she immediately establishes a counterpoint with him.

Gibson's direction is straight ahead. When Ike beats Tina, teeth fly, usually hers. For a movie which features so much music, the silences punctuated by bone-crunching blows are unnerving. This literal approach may work for the film's violent scenes, but it does not translate over to the more sensitive moments. Tina's espousal of Buddhism is presented as a life-saving move and accordingly given full visual treatments. As Tina begins a tremulous chant, the light around her glows gold, her face assumes a new radiance, and later, chanting even effects a miraculous hair-do.

Louise Gray

Xiyan (The Wedding Banquet)

Taiwan/USA 1993

Director: Ang Lee

Certificate

15

Distributor

Mainline

Production Companies

Central Motion Picture Corporation

(Taipei)/Good Machine Inc (New York)

Executive Producer

Jiang Feng-Chyi

Executive in Charge of Production

Cheng Shuei-Chih

Producers

Ang Lee

Ted Hope

James Schamus

Line Producer

Dolly Hall

Associate Producer

Hsu Li-Kong

Production Co-ordinator

Victoria McGarry

Production Manager

Sarah Vogel

Location Manager

John Rath

Post-production Supervisor

Bill Rouady

Casting

American:

Wendy Ettinger

Chinese:

David Lee

Assistant Directors

Dolly Hall

Rob Hallenbake

Annie Tan

Patrick Sisam

Jilly Crook

Screenplay

Ang Lee

Neil Peng

James Schamus

Director of Photography

Jong Lin

Colour

DuArt

Additional Photography

Frank DeMarco

Opticals

Eastern Optical EFX

Editor

Tim Squyres

Production Designer

Steve Rosenzweig

Art Director

Rachel Weinzimer

Set Decorator

Amy Silver

Set Dresser

Amy Tapper

Paintings

R. Baker

L. Bell

Music

Mader

Music Extract

"Piano Sonata in A major: Third Movement Turkish March" (KV 331) by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, performed by Kwan-Yu Chen

Music Supervisor

Paul Cullum

Songs

"Outside Looking In" by Bob O'Hagen, performed by Fondlesocket; "Quisera Ser" by Jorge Pineiro, performed by Louis Shati; "The Maiden's Prayer" by Badarzewsea, performed by Kwan-Yu Chen; "Diamond and Stone" by Ang-Go

Tong, Yu-Zwei Liu,

performed by May

Chin, Ang-Go Tong;

"Wordless Ending" by

Kar Su, Ming-Zwei Liu,

performed by Su-Zung

Lin, Su-Fang Lo

Costume Design

Michael Clancy

Wardrobe Supervisor

Ida Schonfeld

Make-up

Karen Knesevitch

Title Design

Steve Chang

Sound Editor

Pamela Martin

Sound Recordists

Tom Paul

Music

Eric Liljestrand

Sound Re-recorder

Reilly Steele

Sound Effects Editor

Dan Sable

Cast

Sihung Lung

Mr Gao

Ah-Leh Gua

Mrs Gao

Winston Chao

Gao Wai-Tung

Mitchell Lichtenstein

Simon

May Chin

Wei-Wei

Dion Birney

Andrew

Jeanne Kuo Chang

Wai Tung's Secretary

Paul Chen

Yun Chung

Ho-Mean Fu

Jean Hu

Albert Huang

Thomas Koo

Jennifer Lin

Francis Pan

Neal Peng

Elizabeth Yang

Wei-Huang Yang

Ang Lee

Guests

Chung-Wei Chou

Chef

Michael Gaston

Justice of the Peace

Jeffrey Howard

Street Musician

Theresa Hou

Cashier

Ying-Teh Hsu

Bob Law

Neal Huff

Steve

Anthony "Iggy" Ingoglia

Restaurant Manager

Eddie Johns

Haskell

Chih Kuan

Granny Tien

Robert Larenquent

Hispanic Man

Neal Lee

Waiter

Mason C. Lee

Baby

Dean Li

Director Wang

John Nathan

Joe

Tien Pien

Old Chen

Marny Pocato

Miriam

Tonia Rowe

Simon's Nurse

Chung-Hsien Su

Studio Photographer

Patricia Sullivan

Mariane

Vanessa Yang

Mao

Peide Yao

Egg Head

9,690 feet

108 minutes

Partly Subtitled

Budding real-estate magnate Gao Wai-Tung (who has US citizenship) shares a Manhattan brownstone with his Caucasian lover Simon, a physiotherapist, but faces endless pressure from his elderly parents in Taiwan to get married. At Simon's suggestion, Wai-Tung proposes a marriage of convenience to Wei-Wei, a Shanghaiese art student in need of a green card who lives (illegally) in one of his Brooklyn lofts. To Wai-Tung's horror, his parents decide to visit for the wedding. Simon agrees to pose as Wai-Tung's landlord and to move into the basement spare room where they had planned to accommodate Wei-Wei. Mr and Mrs Gao are horrified in turn by the perfunctory City Hall marriage that Wai-Tung has arranged. But a chance meeting with restaurateur Old Chen (who was Gao's chauffeur in his days as a general in the Chinese Nationalist Army) changes everything: a formal wedding banquet is arranged.

Held in a luxury hotel, the banquet is a roaring, drunken success. Afterwards, raucous friends refuse to leave the nuptial bedroom until bride and groom have got into bed together and stripped. Wei-Wei, who has long fancied Wai-Tung, takes advantage of the opportunity to seduce him. Before long, with Mr and Mrs Gao still in residence as house guests and Simon's patience close to breaking point, Wei-Wei tells Wai-Tung that she is pregnant. Simon has a furious row with Wai-Tung in front of the others when he hears the news. Later that day, Mr Gao has a mild stroke. Wai-Tung rushes to the hospital, where he finally comes out to his mother - who is incredulous and baffled, but makes him promise never to tell his father that he is gay.

Wei-Wei determines to abort her child, but changes her mind at the last moment. Meanwhile Mr Gao tells Simon that he knows he is Wai-Tung's lover and tacitly approves - but says that his wife and Wai-Tung must never know. Simon agrees to be "one of the fathers" of Wei-Wei's child and is reconciled with Wai-Tung. Seeing Mr and Mrs Gao off at the airport, Wai-Tung presents them with an album of wedding photos - which includes one picture of himself with Simon. Flanked by Simon and Wei-Wei, he watches his parents leave.

Touchingly dedicated to the real-life couple whose lives inspired the story, *The Wedding Banquet* marks a huge advance on Taiwanese-American director Ang Lee's first feature, *Pushing Hands*. That film was sprung on the tensions between a Caucasian wife and her Chinese father-in-law, but conspic-



Made in heaven: Mitchell Lichtenstein, Winston Chao, May Chin

uously failed to address the mystery of what had attracted the woman to a Chinese husband in the first place. This film, by contrast, has all its gender questions, racial questions and sexual politics down pat. At the same time, even though it never exactly achieves a Renoiresque breadth of spirit, it is agreeably even-handed in its sensitivity to differing points of view - thanks to which it manages several degrees of emotional complexity and is sometimes genuinely affecting: the hospital corridor scene in which the son belatedly comes out to his uncomprehending mother, for instance, is the best written and played in the whole film. And, as that scene suggests, *The Wedding Banquet* is notable for being the first Chinese movie to problematise reactions to a gay relationship rather than the relationship itself.

But the film has larger targets in its sights than Chinese homophobia. The director himself puts in a brief (and, it must be said, rather awkward) cameo appearance in the central wedding banquet scene to comment that the ribald and increasingly hysterical goings-on reflect "5,000 years of sexual repression". His point, of course, is that everyone involved in the fake marriage and its repercussions is a victim of an endemic Chinese inability to deal with sexual realities. This is not a new perception. It was theorised with great sophistication with the Shanghaiese-Hong Kong writer Sun Lung-Kee in his influential 1983 book *The Deep Structure of Chinese Society*, and it has already underpinned plenty of other Chinese movies - even some made in Mainland China, like Huang Jianzhong's *A Girl of Good Family* (Liangjia Fumu, 1985) and *Questions for the Living* (Yi ge Sizhe dui Shengzhe de Fangwen, 1987). And issues like sexual fidelity, paternity and the peer-group pressure to procreate in Chinese communities were given a fairly thorough airing in Wayne Wang's *Eat a Bowl of Tea*.

Still, Ang Lee articulates the point

credibly enough, partly because he presents the central gay 'marriage' so straightforwardly and partly because he is careful to relate the sexual questions to larger questions in the lives of characters with loaded personal histories. Mr Gao, we learn, is not just another Chinese patriarch set on siring a dynastic clan but a former KMT general who saw his family massacred in the Civil War of the late 40s; hence his urgent desire to have a grandchild before his impending death. Similarly, Wei-Wei is under great pressure to stay and succeed in the States because her family, stuck in Shanghai, needs a breadwinner overseas. Thanks to this kind of back-story, the fake marriage could be taken as a ruinous parody of the reunification of China and Taiwan.

Political satire, though, is the least of the film's concerns. Framed as fast-paced situation comedy, the film is so determined not to rupture its own feel-good effect that it cheerfully erases the plot's largest unresolved problem with the climactic revelation that Mr Gao understands and doesn't disapprove of his son's relationship with Simon. This is actually the script's only flagrant implausibility, but it's enough to make the film a wish-fulfilment fantasy on a par with the equally crowd-pleasing *Strictly Ballroom*. As such, *The Wedding Banquet* clearly merits its international success. Lee directs with great brio, making smart use of locations and settings, and his understated closing images suggest a grasp of emotional reticence that will stand him in good stead in future. The performances are variable (newcomer Winston Chao, in particular, is far stronger acting in Chinese than in English), but no lapse is serious enough to damage the overall charm. The print under review - clearly made from an inter-negative - has very poor colour-grading that does no justice to Jong Lin's original cinematography; and there is a problem with the legibility of some subtitles.

Tony Rayns

The Young Americans

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Danny Cannon

Certificate

18

Distributor

Rank

Production Companies

PolyGram Film/
Live Entertainment
present
A Working Title Film
In association with
Trijbits Worrell
Associates
British Screen
Executive Producers
Richard N. Gladstein
Ronna B. Wallace
Philippe Maigret
Producers
Paul Trijbits
Alison Owen
Associate Producer
Andrea M. Franden
Production Supervisor
Nicky Kentish Barnes
Production Co-ordinator
Erica Bensly
Location Manager
Terry Blyther
Casting
Sheila Trezise
US:
Lou Di Giaimo
Assistant Directors
Waldo Roeg
Marcus Catlin
Matthew Sharp
Screenplay
Danny Cannon
David Hilton
Director of Photography
Vernon Layton
Panavision
Colour
Rank Film
Camera Operators
Gavin Finney
2nd:
Danny Cannon
Steadicam Operator
Andy Shuttleworth
Computer Optical Effects
The Computer Film
Company
Editor
Alex Mackie
Production Designer
Laurence Dorman
Art Director
Neil Lamont
Set Dresser
Roy Cannon
Special Effects Supervisor
Tom Harris
Special Effects
Any Effects
John Fontana
Paul Kelly
Mark Flemming
Will Kinder
Music
David Arnold
Music Director
Nicholas Dodd
Music Performed by
The National
Symphony Orchestra
of London
Chameleon Arts
Chorus
Orchestrations
Nicholas Dodd
Music Supervisor
Sharon Boyle
Songs
"A Bunch of Thyme"
(Traditional), "Drink
'Til the Party's Over"
by David Arnold,
performed by Padraig
Gilhooly & The
Rattling Bog Cutters;
"Cathode Ray",
"Uberman", "15
Minutes of Fame"
by and performed

by Sheep On Drugs;
"Gave Up" by Trent
Reznor, performed by
Nine Inch Nails; "Stop
the Confusion" by
Keith Le Blanc, Tim
Simenon, Bernie
Worrell, performed
by Keith Le Blanc, Tim
Simenon; "Hypocrisy
Is the Greatest Luxury"
by M. Franti,
performed by
Disposable Heroes of
Hiphopriy; "Don't Let
Up" by R. Birch, N.
Hallam, performed
by Stereo MC's; "Play
Dead" by Björk
Gudmundsdottir,
David Arnold, Jah
Wobble, performed
by Björk, David Arnold
Costume Design
Howard Burden
Wardrobe Supervisor
US:
Mindy Eshelman
Make-up
Fae Hammond
Titles/Opticals
The Optical
Partnership
Supervising Sound Editor
Eddy Joseph
Sound Editor
Danny Hambrook
ADR Editor
Budge Tremlett
Foley Editor
Michael Feinberg
Sound Recordists
Clive Winter
Paul Hamblin
2nd Unit:
Trevor Rutherford
Music:
Mike Ross Trevor
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordist
Paul Hamblin
Foley Artists
Jack Stew
Dianne Greaves
Stunt Co-ordinator
Terry Forrestal
Stunts
Terry Forrestal
Tip Tipping
Phil Lonagan
Wayne Michaels
Armourer
Tony Robinson
Film Extract
The Blue Lamp (1949)

James Duggan
Dermot O'Neill
Anna Keaveney
Katie Arnold
John Forgeham
Detective Gray
Clifford Predgen
Detective Clark
David Doyle
Robert Dean
Norman Roberts
Dwayne Henry
Femi Akinyemi
John Brobbey
Miles Petit
Young Americans
Karina Cryer
Party Prostitute
Nick Burnell
Frank Pierce
Phil Lonagan
Pierce's Bodyguard
Toni Palmer
Pierce's Widow
Joan Hooley
Lionel's Mother
Adrian Lucas
Doctor
Rachel Teasdale
Samantha Lambley
Nurses
Steve Aston
Inspector

Cast
Harvey Keitel
John Harris
Iain Glen
Edward Foster
John Wood
Richard Donnelly
Terence Rigby
Sidney Callow
Keith Allen
Jack Doyle
Craig Kelly
Christian O'Neill
Thandie Newton
Rachel Stevens
Viggo Mortensen
Fraser
Dave Duffy
Carnegie
Geoffrey McGivern
Carver
Nigel Clauzel
Lionel Stevens
Huggy Leaver
Mark Byrne
Dig Wayne
Gary Washington
Chris Adamson
Billy Cohen

Fleur Taylor
Junkie
Daniel Kruger
Pat
Jean Elton
Market Prostitute
Zoe Anastasis
Diana Lee Barra
Jo Hildon
Rachel's Friends
George Arnold
Leslie Arnold
David Arnold
Paul Cullen
Kieran Skinner
Wedding Band
Ferrellyn Wilson-Apperson
Julie Lewis
Joanna Green
Eva Bjertnes
John Sandford
Matthew Marsden
Darren Kandler
Michael Cullen
Damian Bursby
Andrew Martin
Mayfair Party
Linda Hassani
Sam Harris

9,280 feet
103 minutes

New York cop John Harris has been seconded to London to aid the Metropolitan Police in their investigations into a series of club land killings apparently related to a drug-smuggling syndicate. Harris suspects that Carl Frazer, whom he has been trailing for the last eight months, is behind it all. Harris is teamed up with detectives Carver and Carnegie. Together they attend the funeral of the latest victim, who was murdered at the Temple Club owned by Jack Doyle, who is among the mourners. Also present is Callow, an old-school gangster big on the crime scene in the 60s and 70s. Later, Harris, Carver and Carnegie scout around Doyle's club. There they witness a fight between two youths, which culminates in the stabbing of one of them, Lionel. Harris intervenes and the police take Lionel to hospital. Back at the club, Carver and Carnegie have words with Doyle. Later, the two policemen sit in their car checking out a stash of money that has been given to them; but the notes are duds, and a few moments later their car is fire-bombed. Harris returns to the club and persuades the barman



Lost in mid-Atlantic: Harvey Keitel

Chris, who was present at the fight and a friend of Lionel's, to talk. Chris identifies the boys who were involved in the fight, and Harris takes them in for questioning, though they are later released. Meanwhile, Chris visits Lionel at hospital, where he bumps into Lionel's cousin Rachel, whom he fancies. He invites her to his dad Dermot's wedding. Later, one of Harris' young suspects, Dwayne, meets up with Frazer. The next day Dwayne and his pal are found dead.

Harris tells the British cops about Frazer. Dermot's wedding is attended by Callow and Doyle, who are associates of his. Harris is also there and takes the opportunity to question Callow. Later, Doyle observes a drunken Dermot talking to Callow and interrupts the conversation. After the wedding Chris takes Rachel back to his flat. The following morning, the police turn up and inform Chris that his dad has been murdered.

Frazer is presumed to have been behind the killing. Harris persuades the grieving Chris to help him catch Frazer. Chris agrees to be wired up to collect the requisite evidence. Two masked gunmen break into Callow's home but he wards them off. Harris meets up with Callow who offers to help him in his investigations. At the club, Chris is introduced to Frazer by Doyle. Later Chris meets up with Harris and informs him that Doyle's cohort Mark suspects that he is helping the police. Harris arranges for Mark to be set up on a drugs arrest. But the plans go awry and Mark is discharged. This endangers Chris, who is at the club with Frazer and Doyle. Harris and a squadron of armed police race round to the club. Rachel arrives at the club to make up with Chris after an earlier row. When an assignment of drugs is delivered to the club, Harris decides to go in with his men. In the ensuing fray, Frazer takes Rachel hostage. Callow, however, saves the day when he turns up and blasts Frazer away. With the case solved and the syndicate busted, Harris returns to New York where he hopes to patch up his relationship with his estranged wife.

As Harvey Keitel's detective Harris flies into London, he watches a video of *The Blue Lamp*, no doubt trying to do his homework on the British bobby. Twenty-five year-old Danny Cannon's directorial debut is thankfully a long haul away from the plodding days of Jack Warner. It is a youthful attempt to give the British *policier* a slick shot in the arm, and as such it should be admired. Using widescreen and pumping up the volume, Cannon and his team wrench the genre away from its predominantly televisual antecedents. From the opening shot of London, flooded in bloody red light, they make their mark on the city, giving it the kind of glossy allure that has always been lavished on New York and LA. This is British cinema aimed fairly at the multiplex market.

But with police sirens howling and neon lights flashing, Cannon also plays up the American connection. He carefully avoids the more obvious landmark shots of red buses, black cabs, and Piccadilly Circus, in favour of the designer docklands and Arsenal football stadium. "It's not exactly Hollywood," quips one of our boys of Soho's mean streets. "Everything eventually becomes the same," is Harris' world-weary reply.

Indeed, as the good lieutenant, Harvey Keitel looks like he has seen it all. Meanwhile the no-good smoothie Frazer - Viggo Mortensen doing his best to perfect the *Godfather* mumble - surveys the housing estates of North London and comments, "I used to live in a neighbourhood like this," before making the lads from the Kentish Town projects an offer that they can't refuse. It's a familiar line. Indeed, it seems impossible to make a wholly indigenous British thriller - there has to be an American accent. It's part of the formula - everything eventually becomes the same.

If this is Cannon's trite critical thesis, then he also makes it his practice. But the trouble is that there is so much here which is the same. Genre thrives on twists, but this sketchily-scripted film keeps to the straight and narrow. Characterization tends to the stock, with Terence Rigby's Callow being the most patent example - the geezer from the Whitechapel manor, with a heart as gold as his wrist-watch, whose patriotic saving of the day is the film's most fatuous move.

Meanwhile, depth comes in the most banal of back stories, notably Harris' troubled domestic life, which entails a few anguished phone calls to his wife back home. Similarly, Chris' relationship with Rachel has some obligatory ups and downs, mostly revolving around his inability to discuss his traumatized, motherless past. But such details seem no more than glib shorthand to convey that these men are complex - father and son figures bonded together in their emotional paralysis. It is to the credit of Cannon's cast - particularly young newcomer Craig Kelly as Chris - that they make up for the script's defects.

Lizzie Francke

VIDEO

Mark Kermode reviews this month's rental releases and Peter Dean new retail videos

No fear: Virginia Madsen in 'Candyman'



Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses.

A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Braindead

New Zealand 1992/PolyGram PG 1005

Certificate 18 Director Peter Jackson Jackson hits the right note with this outrageously comic and gory film. Zombie mutants are viciously taken apart as an innocent young hero learns lessons in life and love. Disgusting fun. (S&S June 1993)

Body of Evidence

USA 1992/Guild 8705

Certificate 18 Director Uli Edel Dreary erotic thriller with an uncharismatic Madonna as the steamy heroine who has a deadly passion for wealthy men. Willem Dafoe joins in the physical fun while Joe Mantegna looks on in disbelief. (S&S May 1993)

Broadway Bound

USA 1991/Tartan Video TVT 1021/Widescreen

Certificate PG Director Paul Bogart The final part of Neil Simon's semi-autobiographical trilogy (*Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Biloxi Blues*), adapted from his stage play. A successful Broadway writer reminisces about his early life in Brighton Beach. Entertaining but not groundbreaking. (S&S June 1992)

Candyman

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 14073

Certificate 18 Director Bernard Rose Rose's ingenious adaptation retains the gritty flavour of Clive Barker's short story despite the shift Stateside. Virginia Madsen is terrific as the sociologist tracking a mythical killer through the bizarre underworld of a deprived housing estate. The best Barker film since *Hellraiser*. (S&S March 1993) □

Cop and a Half

USA 1993/CIC Video VHA 1653

Certificate PG Director Henry Winkler A child who is the only witness to a crime demands a day on the beat in return for his evidence. Grizzled cop Burt Reynolds agrees to play along in this cute family romp which sounds worse than it is. (S&S July 1993)

The Distinguished Gentleman

USA 1992/Hollywood D917162

Certificate 15 Director Jonathan Lynn Eddie Murphy plays a 'lovable' rogue who worms his way into the Whitehouse. His initial money-grabbing intentions turn to altruism thanks to love and the plight of a sick child. A terrible film. (S&S April 1993)

Lorenzo's Oil

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1654

Certificate 15 Director George Miller A painful true-life drama with superb acting from Susan Sarandon as an anguished mother whose child is

stricken with an appalling nervous illness. (S&S March 1993)

Love Crimes

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 12968

Certificate 18 Director Lizzie Borden Borden was unhappy with this cut of her psycho-sexual thriller about masochistic female pleasure – certainly the viewer is left baffled as a DA (Sean Young) tracks a slimy con man. Patrick Bergin fares better as the mercurial male protagonist. (S&S July 1992)

Night of the Living Dead

USA 1990/Tartan Video TVT 1024

Certificate 18 Director Tom Savini Although former special effects man Savini claims that a lot of the gore was cut from the movie for commercial reasons, this remake of George A. Romero's chiller benefits artistically from its understated nastiness. Romero wrote the nimble script. (S&S April 1993)

Ruby Cairo

USA 1992/EV EVV 1254

Certificate 15 Director Graeme Clifford Andie MacDowell ploughs through turgid dialogue in this tedious sub-40s thriller. (S&S June 1993)

Shadows and Fog

USA 1991/20.20 Vision NVT 12822

Certificate 15 Director Woody Allen Unfortunately lost in the midst of the Woody/Mia scandal last year, Allen pays homage to 30s German Expressionism while thematically musing on guilt, death and responsibility. The script is an expansion of Allen's 70s play *The Killer Strikes*. (S&S April 1993)

Toys

USA 1992/FoxVideo 1992

Certificate PG Director Barry Levinson Innocent fool Robin Williams tries to save his late father's toy factory from being turned into a war-machine in this clumsy, 'meaningful' adult children's tale. (S&S March 1993) □

Trespass

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1640

Certificate 15 Director Walter Hill Ugly action film spuriously connected by the press to the LA riots. Two white boys (Bill Paxton and William Sadler) stumble on to a black gang's turf. Ice T and Ice Cube reinforce reactionary racist stereotypes about African American lawlessness. (S&S April 1993)

Under Siege

USA 1992/Warner V012643

Certificate 15 Director Andrew Davis After the extreme violence of *Out for Justice*, Steven Seagal opts for more mainstream action thrills with tepid results. When fiendish terrorists hijack a warship it's up to the cook (Seagal) to save the day. (S&S March 1993) □

Rental premiere

Amityville: A New Generation

USA 1992/Medusa/20.20 Vision MO 397

Certificate 18 Director John Murlowski Producer Christopher Defaria Screenplay Christopher Defaria, Antonio Toro Lead Actors Ross Partridge, Julia Nickson-

Soul, Lala Sloatman, David Naughton, Terry O'Quinn 82 minutes

This umpteenth instalment has its moments with a mirror keeping the Amityville murders alive. Special effects team Cruse and Co pull off a few coups, notably an effective exploding face.

Babylon 5

USA 1993/Warner V012656

Certificate PG Director Richard Compton Producer Robert Latham Brown Screenplay J. Michael Straczynski Lead Actors Michael O'Hare, Tamlyn Tomita, Jerry Doyle, Mira Furlan 89 minutes Passable TV sci-fi fare in the *Star Trek* mould. Peace talks at space station Babylon 5 – the meeting place for ambassadors of warring intergalactic nations – are interrupted by alien conspiracies.

Dead Before Dawn

USA 1992/Odyssey ODY 356

Certificate 15 Director Charles Correll Producer Ron Gilbert Screenplay John Ireland Lead Actors Cheryl Ladd, Jameson Parker, G.W. Bailey, Kim Coates 93 minutes True-life TV drama concerning an abused woman (Ladd) who fakes her own death in order to entrap her violent husband.

Double Jeopardy

USA 1992/FoxVideo 5815

Certificate 18 Director Lawrence Schiller Producer Jeffrey Morton Screenplay Craig Tepper, Monte Stettin Lead Actors Rachel Ward, Bruce Boxleitner, Sela Ward, Sally Kirkland 102 minutes A lively thriller with enjoyable plot twists which is almost ruined by Rachel Ward's stiff performance. An adulterous husband witnesses an ex-girlfriend's murder of a rapist. The truth surfaces when his attorney wife takes on the case.

Fatal Proposal

USA 1993/20.20 Vision NVT 20720

Certificate 18 Director Michael Switzer Producers Joel Fields, Leonard Hill Screenplay Frank Abatmarco Lead Actors Brooke Shields, Richard Thomas, Viveka Davis, William Allen Young 114 minutes

Richard Thomas turns in an impressive performance as an obsessive maniac in this workmanlike thriller. A glamorous systems analyst (Shields) attracts the unwelcome attentions of a socially inadequate man (Thomas). Silly but entertaining.

Forced to Fight

USA 1991/CIC Video VHA 1594

Certificate 18 Director Oley Sassone Producer Mike Elliott Screenplay Allison Burnett, Charles Mattera Lead Actors Don "The Dragon" Wilson, Richard Roundtree, Richard Paul, Stan Longindus 85 minutes

CIC's unremarkable Roger Corman Collection continues with this by-numbers martial arts vehicle featuring the muscular talents of karate champ Wilson. A framed convict is caught in a race war between prisoners.

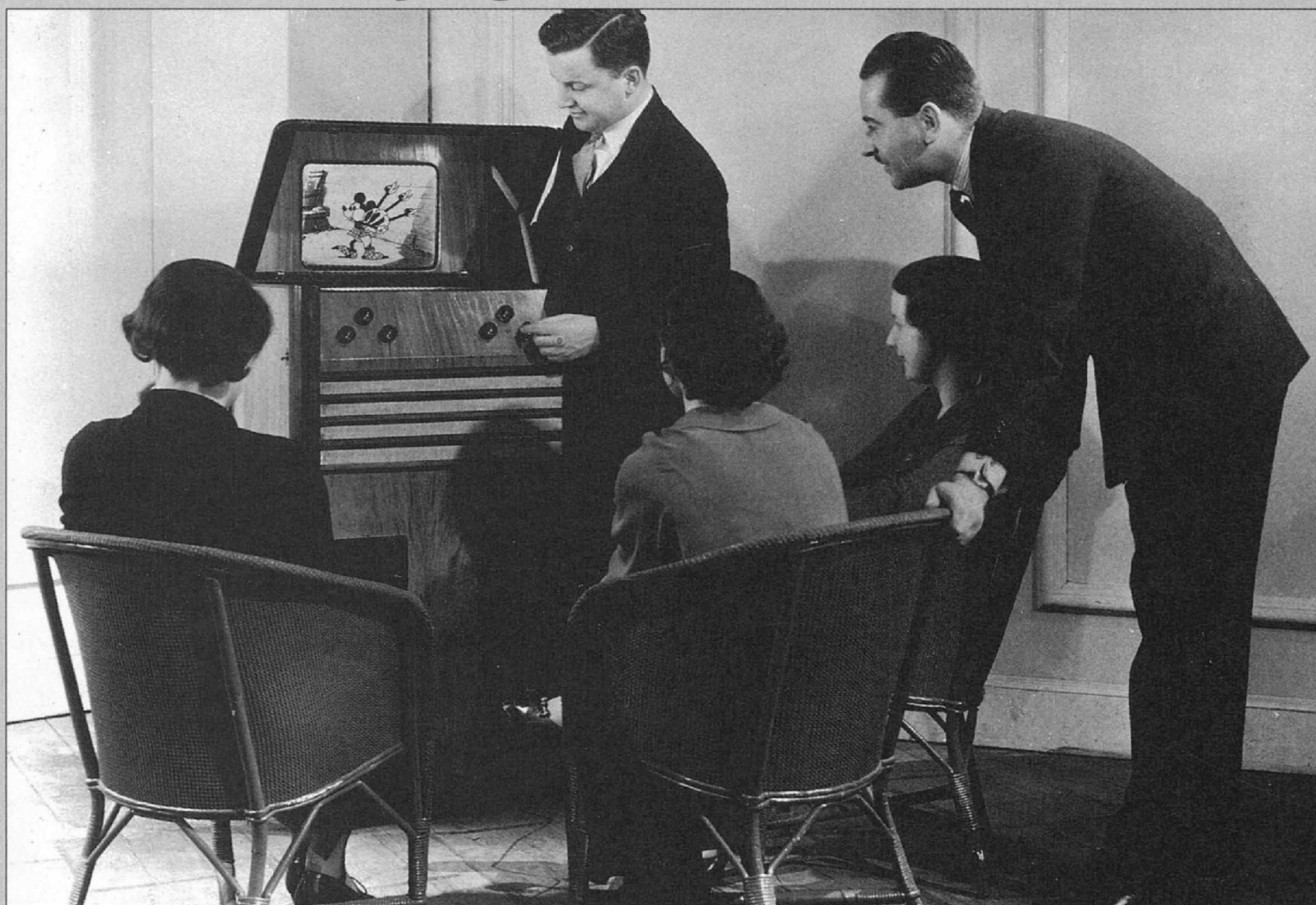
For Their Own Good

USA 1992/Odyssey ODY 358

Certificate PG Director Ed Kaplan Producers C. Tad Devlin, Martin Huberty, Phyllis Rossheim, Ruthe Benton Screenplay Ed Kaplan Lead Actors Elizabeth Perkins,

Jill McGreal on video's second-class status

Pure enjoyment



Family occasion: video provides different pleasures than going to the pictures

There is a great deal of snobbery about video. The video sector is generally relegated to the back pages of film and trade magazines which grudgingly acknowledge its existence only because of the industry's large share of the market. Video rental outlets are characterised as downmarket stores frequented by people who wouldn't recognise a good movie if it hit them in the face. This 'videoism' is nurtured by cultural guardians of cinema, purists who tell us that what was intended for the big screen should be seen that way. And, as with all types of snobbery, there is an inverted form – video spotting – whereby facts are obsessively collected and classified in an attempt to turn the area into a worthwhile subject for academic research.

There are some movies whose impact is lost on the small screen – Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* is the example most often cited. But *2001* is one of those exceptional films where the spectacle is part of the statement. Films that rely solely on spectacle are not necessarily any good whether they are seen on the big or small screen. The video industry, with its eye constantly on the main chance, takes little notice of this type of criticism, releasing sanitised versions of major films to a public who apparently wouldn't care even if it knew the difference. Worse still, in the purists' books, is the straight-to-video phenomenon, where the profit motive often outweighs artistic considerations.

In fact, the moving image can be experienced and enjoyed in many different contexts. Perhaps one of the reasons for the snobbery is that within a hierarchy of film-viewing risk and

investment, going to the cinema produces the greatest financial risk. The average price of a West End movie ticket is £7. Add to this the price of popcorn, travel, drinks and the babysitter, and an evening at the pictures can cost as much as £25 per person. But there are still many reasons for going to see a film at a cinema rather than watching it on video. It makes you part of a cultural vanguard and can generate many satisfying "Have you seen so-and-so..." conversations. There are also the pleasures of the big screen and the social event. But there are many who believe that the rise of video is a threat to all this.

In recent years the video market has exploded, with 80 per cent penetration of VCRs into the home. Movies now appear on the rental shelves within two or three months of a West End release, though the titles available in the UK are usually limited to mainstream Hollywood releases. Compared with a trip to the cinema, renting a film is a low-risk investment. And in a different way to cinema, renting can also be a social or family occasion.

Cheapest of all is the recording off-air option. Tapes can be recycled many times or programmes saved for future repeat viewings. The problem with off-air recording is that the choice is even more limited. It's the programmers who determine what you can record and consume. The menu may be extended by subscribing to cable or satellite channels, but despite evidence of an increase in satellite-dish sales, this is a option that most consumers in Britain still have not wholeheartedly embraced.

With all these possibilities available to viewers, one would think that the

market would be saturated, but on top of this there is the booming video retail market. High street costs per unit range from £4.99 bin bargains to £17.99 at the top end of the scale, and perhaps because of the greater financial risk, the retail market is considered more upmarket than the rental. But the appeal of owning a video must come down to its repeat value, and the risk element enters when you consider that a bought video cannot be returned or recycled. Like a misjudged clothes purchase that hangs accusingly in the wardrobe, the bad video buy glares at you from the shelf.

It is impossible to predict which films are going to be watched over and over again. And certainly it's not necessarily the blockbusters or the 'best films' that possess repeat watching quality, especially when children are involved. In my house *Flash Gordon*, most Hitchcock titles, *Black Narcissus*, *Some Like It Hot*, *Dune*, *The Producers*, *2001*, *RoboCop*, *Brazil*, *The Life of Brian*, television's *The Young Ones* and assorted animation have all topped the poll at one time or another.

Children derive pleasure and comfort from repetition and familiarity. Our childish wishes surface, sometimes in barely altered form, everywhere in our adult lives (who has not taken delight in being able to repeat the dialogue from a favourite film?). Reliving past pleasures is one of video viewing's greatest strengths. The original enjoyment of the cinema can be recreated in your living room – and despite the purists' dire predictions, cinema attendances have in fact increased over the past two years. Dare I suggest that this is related to an increased awareness of film due to the accessibility of video?

Laura San Giacomo, Charles Haid, C.C.H. Pounder 91 minutes

The true story of Sally Thompson's legal battle to win damages against the McCabe chemical corporation which insisted on the sterilisation of its female employees. Strong performances by Perkins and San Giacomo combined with an engrossing story make this bearable TV fodder.

In the Company of Darkness

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1649

Certificate TBC Director David Anspaugh
Producer Richard Brams Screenplay John Leekley Lead Actors Helen Hunt, Steven Weber, Jeff Fahey 90 minutes

An undercover rookie cop befriends a withdrawn, intelligent young man known to have killed a number of young boys. Her own long-buried emotional problems surface as she begins to enter his world.

It's Nothing Personal

USA 1993/Braveworld V090551

Certificate 15 Director Brad May Producer Papazian Hirsch Screenplay Lee Rose Lead Actors Amanda Donohoe, Bruce Dern 89 minutes

Amanda Donohoe gives an unconvincing and hysterical portrayal of a cop on the edge, making Dern's all too brief appearance as a washed-up bounty hunter a welcome relief. Poorly scripted TV movie.

The Mutilator

USA 1984/Vipco 5001

Certificate 18 Director/Producer/Screenplay Buddy Cooper Lead Actors Matt Mitler, Frances Raines, Bill Hitchcock, Pamela Weddle Cooper 85 minutes

A wooden slice-and-dice with sporadic gory interludes. High school students are stalked by a demented father.

Night Trap

USA 1993/Guild G8723

Certificate 18 Director David A. Prior Producer Jill Silverthorne Screenplay David A. Prior, John Clanetti Lead Actors Robert Davi, Michael Ironside, Lesley-Anne Down, Lydie Denier 93 minutes

This shameless *Angel Heart* spin-off retains a formulaic charm despite its corniness. Robert Davi as a New Orleans detective on the trail of a demonic killer is grizzled to the point of parody, while Michael Ironside looks great in a beard and ponytail stolen from De Niro's Louis Cyphre.

A Passion for Murder

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 20688

Certificate 18 Director Neill Fearnley Producers Vonnice Von Helmolt, Robert Vince Screenplay Arne Olsen, John Alan Schwartz Lead Actors Michael Nouri, Michael Ironside, Joanna Pacula 88 minutes

Upbeat thriller about a Detroit cabbie (Nouri) who picks up a feisty temptress (Pacula) on the run from a political murder. Michael Ironside provides the necessary weight while Pacula raises a few laughs.

Pet Sematary Two

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2705

Certificate 18 Director Mary Lambert Producer Ralph S. Singleton Screenplay Richard Outten, David S. Goyer Lead Actors Edward Furlong, Anthony Edwards,

Clancy Brown, Jared Rushton 96 minutes
Lacking the morbid tone of the original, Lambert's sequel is unnecessarily repetitive. A bullied schoolboy takes his dead dog to an Indian burial ground to be resurrected.

Prison Heat

USA 1992/Warner V032119

Certificate 18 Director Joel Silberg Producer Allan Greenblatt Screenplay David Alexander Lead Actors Rebecca Chambers, Lori Jo Hendrix, Kena Land, Toni Naples 83 minutes

Four American women are framed on drug charges while crossing the border between Greece and Turkey. Rape, beatings and torture while in jail encourage a dramatic escape bid. Not a patch on *Chained Heat* (or even *Red Heat*).

Stolen Babies

USA 1993/Odyssey ODY 359

Certificate PG Director Eric Laneuville Producer Ann Kindberg Screenplay Sharon Elizabeth Doyle Lead Actors Lea Thompson, Kathleen Quinlan, Mary Tyler Moore, Ian Sander 90 minutes
Lea Thompson fights to bring down matriarch Mary Tyler Moore, whose orphanage in 40s Tennessee trades in stolen babies which are sold to wealthy couples. True-story TV drama.

A Stranger in the Mirror

USA 1992/Imperial Entertainment IMP 128

Certificate 15 Director Charles Jarrot Producer Hugh Spencer Phillips Screenplay Stirling Silliphant Lead Actors Perry King, Lori Loughlin, Christopher Plummer 94 minutes
TV adaptation of Sidney Sheldon's best-selling potboiler. An upcoming comedian's marriage to an aspiring actress seems perfect except for his drug habit and her porno past.

Street Knight

USA 1993/Warner V032117

Certificate 18 Director Albert Magnoli Producer Mark DiSalle Screenplay Richard Friedman Lead Actors Jeff Speakman, Christopher Neame 87 minutes
Bland goody-goody Speakman becomes involved in an LA gang war and punches his way to justice.

Through the Eyes of a Killer

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2753

Certificate 18 Director Peter Markle Producer Tom Rowe Screenplay John Pielmeier, from the novel by Christopher Fowler Lead Actors Richard Dean Anderson, Marg Helgenberger, David Marshall Grant, Melinda Culea 94 minutes
An above average cable TV chiller faithfully adapted from Fowler's story. A young woman's ill-chosen affair turns her new apartment into a battlefield. Anderson is astutely cast against type as a weird builder and Markle pulls off some effective frights. Tippi Hedren makes an unnecessary cameo appearance.

The Tommyknockers

USA 1993/Warner V035577

Certificate 15 Director John Power Producers Jane Bieber, Jane Scott Screenplay Lawrence D. Cohen, from the novel by Stephen King Lead Actors Jimmy Smits, Marg Helgenberger, Robert Carradine, E.G. Marshall, Allyce Beasley, Cliff De

Young 114 minutes

Star-studded TV adaptation of a Stephen King story. A quiet town is transformed into a nightmare by the chance discovery of an ancient talisman.

Twin Dragons

USA/Hong Kong 1993/Imperial

Entertainment IMP 129

Certificate PG Directors Tsui Hark/Ringo Lam Producer Teddy Robin Screenplay Barry Wong, Tsui Hark, Cheung Tung Jo Lead Actors Jackie Chan, Teddy Robin, Maggie Cheung, Nina Li Chi, Kirk Wong 100 minutes

Kung fu star Chan takes an uncertain stab at family entertainment in this action comedy. Twins, separated at birth, find their adult lives entangled.

Undefeatable

USA 1993/Medusa MO 395

Certificate 18 Director/Producer Godfrey Hall Screenplay Robert Vassar, Steve Harper Lead Actors Cynthia Rothrock, Don Niam, John Miller, Donna Jason 89 minutes
The terrific trailer tag-line is: "He'll kill her...or anyone who reminds him of her!". Cynthia Rothrock attacks a large number of disposable goons in a battle to track down a sadistic killer with a grudge.

Retail

An Affair to Remember

USA 1957/FoxVideo 1240 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Leo McCarey Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr en route to meet their future partners play lovebirds trying to avoid the inevitable on a trans-Atlantic voyage to New York. This panned and scanned Scope version leads to a number of serious offscreen omissions. (MFB No. 285)

Beauty and the Beast

USA 1991/Walt Disney D213252 Price £14.99

Certificate U Directors Gary Trousdale/Kirk Wise
Stunning return to form for the full-length Disney animation movie which blends traditional techniques with modern computer animation. The daughter of an eccentric inventor is the only hope if the Beast is to return to his princely form. (S&S October 1992)

A bout de souffle (Breathless)

France 1959/Tartan Video TVT 1106 Price £15.99

Certificate 18 Director Jean-Luc Godard Hand-held camera, jump cuts and a



Disney's 'Beauty and the Beast'

directness of approach make this homage to the American gangster B movie Godard's finest. A film that oozes style. Subtitles B/W (MFB No. 655)

Chess Fever (Shakhmatnaya Goryachka)

USSR 1925/Connoisseur CR 126

Price £9.99

Certificate U Directors Vsevolod Pudovkin/Nikolai Shipovsky
Rare outing for this witty short about one man's obsession with chess and his fiancée's vain attempts to wean him off the game. Leading Grand Masters of the 20s are featured, along with a handsome new score by Roger White. Silent B/W (MFB No. 495)

Un Coeur en hiver (A Heart in Winter)

France 1992/Artificial Eve ART 060

Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 15 Director Claude Sautet
A cold, introverted violin repairman seduces his partner's new girlfriend – a violinist who's trying to find inspiration during a recording session – and then rebuffs her when she declares her love for him. Subtitles (S&S May 1993)

Criss Cross

USA 1992/MGM/UA S052496 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Chris Menges (S&S Video December 1992)

Danger Within

UK 1959/Lumiere LUM 2005 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Don Chaffey
The escape plans of British prisoners in an Italian POW camp are foiled by a traitor. Based on the real-life exploits of producer Colin Lesslie and writer Michael Gilbert and featuring a who's who of British leading men of the 50s. B/W (MFB No. 302)

Dark Eyes of London

UK 1939/Lumiere LUM 2040 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Walter Summers
Enjoyable early British horror in which the police try to track down the killer responsible for a series of drownings in the Thames. B/W (MFB No. 71)

The Dark Wind

USA 1991/Guild GL 51342 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Errol Morris
An Indian cop witnesses an aircraft crash and becomes involved in a labyrinthine conspiracy plot. Morris' fiction debut suffers from dramatic constraints but is still worth watching for its occasional Lynchian weirdness. (S&S June 1992)

Dealers

UK 1989/MGM/UA S090574 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Colin Bucksey
Appalling nonsense set in Docklands and using the yuppie boom as the backdrop for a thriller in a similar way to Ron Peck's *Empire State*. (MFB No. 667)

The Dressmaker

UK 1988/MGM/UA S090571 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Jim O'Brien
A young GI becomes caught in the crossfire between two sisters during World War II after their niece takes him home. (MFB No. 660)

Excalibur

USA 1981/Warner S022018 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director John Boorman
Over long, lumbering but visually impressive Arthurian legend. Nicol

Williamson as an offbeat Merlin is the highlight. (MFB No. 569)

Final Analysis

USA 1992/Warner S012243 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Phil Joanou
A messy movie starring Richard Gere as a psychiatrist who becomes a murder suspect after becoming involved with two strange sisters. (S&S June 1992)

The Gentle Gunman

UK 1952/Lumiere LUM 2041 Price £10.99

Certificate U Directors Michael Relph/Basil Dearden

John Mills and Dirk Bogarde play Irish brothers who are sent to London by the IRA during World War II with the task of planting bombs in the underground. B/W (MFB No. 226)

Gleaming the Cube

USA 1988/MGM/UA S090573 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Graeme Clifford
Competent skateboarding interludes punctuate this thriller featuring Christian Slater, who takes revenge for the killing of his adopted Vietnamese brother. (MFB No. 670)

The Happiest Days of Your Life

UK 1950/Lumiere LUM 2042 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Frank Launder
A clerical error at the Ministry of Education billets Margaret Rutherford's girls' school with Alastair Sim's boys' school in this excellent farce. Joyce Grenfell stars as the awkward gym teacher Miss "Just call me sausage" Gossage. B/W (MFB No. 195)

The Horrors of the Black Museum

UK 1959/Lumiere LUM 2039 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Arthur Crabtree
Crippled crime writer Michael Gough is delighted when the police are baffled by a series of murders about which he knows more than he lets on. B/W (MFB No. 304)

Indochine

France 1991/Electric Pictures EP 0033 Price £12.99

Certificate 15 Director Régis Wargnier
Catherine Deneuve stars as the wealthy owner of a rubber plantation in French Indochina during the early 30s whose adopted daughter runs away after killing a French officer. Subtitles (S&S April 1993)

I Was on Mars

Germany/USA 1991/Tartan Video TVT 1107 Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 18 Director Dani Levy
Stranger Than Paradise is the obvious comparison to this quirky comedy about a Polish emigré's effect on two New York brothers, one of whom steals all her money when she first arrives in the Big Apple. Maria Schrader is endearing in the lead despite her inability to communicate. (S&S July 1993)

Keoma (The Violent Breed)

Italy 1975/Aktiv AKT 0007 Price £12.99/Widescreen

Certificate 18 Director Enzo G. Castellari
Franco Nero plays a half-breed who is adopted by William Berger and is resented by his new brothers. Extremely stylish film with a curious Brechtian-style soundtrack that explains what's about to happen in the next scene. Aka *Django Rides Again* (MFB No. 526)



Nouvelle gangster: Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg in Godard's 'A bout de souffle'

The Killing of a Chinese Bookie

USA 1976/Electric Pictures EP 0040
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director John Cassavetes
Strip-club owner Cosmo Vittelli (Ben Gazzara) agrees to kill a mob rival in order to save his business after a disastrous all-night poker game. Long and pretentious cult movie hit. (MFB No. 556)

Kiss Shot

USA 1991/Video Gems NR 5011
Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Jerry London
(S&S Video April 1992)

Léolo

Canada 1992/Tartan Video TVT 1101
Price £15.99

Certificate 18 Director Jean-Claude Lauzon
An adolescent boy living in a squalid Montreal tenement block escapes into a private fantasy world, first imagining himself to be of Italian descent and then falling slowly into madness. Subtitles (S&S May 1993)

Light Sleeper

USA 1991/PolyGram GLD 51332
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Paul Schrader
This tale of a 40-year-old cocaine peddler's quest for redemption, although resembling *Taxi Driver* and *American Gigolo* too closely, is still an underrated, broody mini-masterpiece. Starring Willem Dafoe. (S&S April 1992)

Liquid Sky

USA 1982/Tartan Video TVT 1031
Price £15.99

Certificate 18 Director Slava Tsukerman
Invisible aliens seeking heroin and an endomorphic chemical which is secreted by the brain during orgasm find what they are looking for in the apartment of a New York model. By turns self-consciously bizarre and beautiful. (MFB No. 599)

Lovers (Amantes)

Spain 1991/Mainline Pictures MPV 001
Price £15.99

Certificate 18 Director Vicente Aranda

A tragic love triangle begins when a young man is seduced by his landlady, forcing his girlfriend to use her virginal innocence to win him back. Best seen for Almodóvar regular Victoria Abril. (S&S October 1992)

Madame Sousatzka

UK 1988/VVL 0880023 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director John Schlesinger
An eccentric piano teacher (Shirley MacLaine) moulds a 14-year-old prodigy into a concert pianist. (MFB No. 662)

The Man in the Moon

USA 1991/MGM/UA S052500 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Robert Mulligan
Two sisters compete for the same boy in this emotional coming-of-age melodrama set in 50s Louisiana. (S&S March 1992)

My Cousin Vinny

USA 1992/FoxVideo 1876 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Jonathan Lynn
Wide boy New York lawyer Joe Pesci attempts to clear his framed cousin's name in a hick town. (S&S July 1992)

My Own Private Idaho

USA 1991/FoxVideo 5648 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Gus Van Sant
Shakespeare meets grunge in an occasionally stylish account of a narcoleptic rent boy who becomes the lover of the mayor's son. (S&S April 1992)

Nails

USA 1992/PolyGram MED 13122
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director John Flynn
(S&S Video October 1992)

Olivier Olivier

France 1991/Tartan Video TVT 1088
Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 18 Director Agnieszka Holland
A young male prostitute in Paris claims to be Olivier Duval, a young boy who disappeared without a trace six years previously. His return home reopens old conflicts and creates sexual tensions. Subtitles (S&S February 1993)

O Lucky Man!

USA 1973/Warner S011249 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Lindsay Anderson

Highly original satire with Malcolm McDowell as a coffee salesman trying to get to the top of the ladder. (MFB No. 473)

Opening Night

USA 1977/Electric Pictures EP 0042
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director John Cassavetes
An actress (Gena Rowlands) begins to confuse reality with her performance as an ageing beauty after the shock of seeing the accidental death of a teenage fan. (MFB No. 533)

The Ox (Oxen)

Sweden 1992/Artificial Eye ART 061
Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 15 Director Sven Nykvist
An Old Testament morality pervades this tale of a family and rural village which is torn apart by the illegal slaughter of an ox in a man's desperate bid to save his starving family in the Swedish famine of 1868. Subtitles (S&S April 1993)

Paris Trout

USA 1991/Curzon CV 0023 Price £15.99

Certificate 18 Director Stephen Gyllenhaal
Dennis Hopper plays a racist man who kills a young black girl and wounds her mother when a car deal turns sour. Convinced that he cannot be convicted he becomes increasingly unhinged as his wife betrays him and his lawyer expresses doubts about his case. (S&S October 1991)

Peter's Friends

UK 1992/EV EV 51103 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Kenneth Branagh
Stephen Fry invites his old university chums to his mansion for the holiday season in this jaw-droppingly unfunny re-run of *The Big Chill*. (S&S December 1992)

Priest of Love

UK 1981/Curzon CV 0022 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Christopher Miles
While D.H. Lawrence seeks warmer climes to aid his TB, his work starts attracting the unwelcome attention of the authorities. This is the director's cut, which seems less ponderous than the two previous longer versions. (MFB No. 627)

Prime Target

USA 1991/Video Gems NR 5025
Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director David Heavener
(S&S Video August 1992)

The Princess and the Goblin

UK/Hungary 1992/EV EVS 1104
Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director József Gémes
Unremarkable children's animation film featuring a king, a princess, a miner's son and several goblins. (S&S January 1993)

The Quince Tree Sun (El sol de membrillo)

Spain 1991/Artificial Eye ART 062
Price £15.99

Certificate U Director Victor Erice
Erice's sumptuous study of an artist's vain attempts to capture the special light of the early autumn when the sun shines through the leaves and ripens the fruit. His project is constantly interrupted by inclement weather, friends and admirers. Subtitles (S&S April 1993)

Radio On

UK 1979/Imagine IHE 1007 Price £14.99

Certificate 15 Director Chris Petit
A man travels from London to Bristol to try to find out more about his brother's death. Petit's debut feature is an affectionate tribute to Wim Wenders' road movies using Lisa Kreuzer in the cast and Robby Müller-style photography. B/W (MFB No. 552)

Rage and Honour II: Hostile Take-over

USA 1992/PolyGram MED 13142
Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Guy Norris
(S&S Video March 1993)

Rude Awakening

USA 1989/MGM/UA S090575 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Directors Aaron Russo/
David Greenwalt

Two hippies try to rekindle the spirit of the 60s in their old friends after returning from a Central American commune that has been their home for the past two decades. A weak farce. (MFB No. 674)

Scenes from the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills

USA 1989/MGM/UA S090576 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Paul Bartel
Two neighbouring Beverly Hills' servants have a bet that they can seduce each other's mistresses in this achingly funny dissection of the Hollywood elite. Rude, irreverent and very funny. (MFB No. 672)

The Silent Touch

UK/Poland/Denmark 1992/Curzon
CV 0021 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Krzysztof Zanussi
A young intense music student with healing powers visits a composer who has remained silent for 40 years since the death of his first wife. Dull treatise on art and inspiration. (S&S April 1993)

Sleepwalkers

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVR 24587
Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Mick Garris
A mother and son, the last remaining survivors of a half-human clan, feed off young girls to stay alive. Shape-shifting special effects are the only highlight of this horror yarn. (S&S August 1992)

Terror Train

USA 1979/MGM/UA S090572 Price £10.99
Certificate 18 Director Roger Spottiswoode
A New Year's fraternity party on a moving train starts turning up dead students in this first-rate slasher-thriller. (MFB No. 563)

Texas Addio (Avenger, Goodbye Texas)

Italy 1966/Aktiv AKT 0006
Price £12.99/Widescreen
Certificate 15 Director Ferdinando Baldi
Lightweight revenge Western with Franco Nero playing a sheriff who throws in his badge in order to find his father's murderer. The print quality is good, the dubbing odd and the violence typically over the top. (MFB No. 442)

Traces of Red

USA 1992/EV EVS 1098 Price £10.99
Certificate 18 Director Andy Wolk
James Belushi stars as a cop who gets too close to a witness in a murder case à la *Basic Instinct*/Body of Evidence. (S&S February 1993)

The Wild Angels

USA 1966/VVL 0878043 Price £10.99
Certificate 18 Director Roger Corman
Heavenly Blues (Peter Fonda) loses a gang member while evading the police and then rescues the body for a decent burial. Nancy Sinatra, Bruce Dern and Diane Ladd co-star. (MFB No. 427)

A Woman Under the Influence

USA 1975/Electric Pictures EP 0041
Price £15.99
Certificate 15 Director John Cassavetes
Sexual roles push a middle-aged woman to the edge of madness as she vainly seeks adventure from her life. Gena Rowlands and Peter Falk are mesmerising in the leads. (MFB No. 504)

Retail premiere

The Chinese Boxer

Hong Kong 1968/Lumiere LUM 2009
Price £10.99
Certificate 18 Director Jimmy Wang Yu
Producer Runme Shaw Screenplay Jimmy Wang Yu Lead Actors Jimmy Wang Yu, Lo Lieh, Wang Ping, Chen Hsing 89 minutes
Early export before the kung fu craze really hit the West. This has a young disciple avenging the death of his master.

Fever

USA 1991/Video Gems NR 5003
Price £10.99
Certificate 18 Director Larry Elikann
Producer Nick Gillott Screenplay Larry Brothers Lead Actors Sam Neill, Armand Assante, Marcia Gay Harden, Joe Spano, Greg Henry 100 minutes
Lawyer Sam Neill and ex-con Armand Assante team up to rescue a mutual lover in a hard-hitting thriller.

Heart of Dixie

USA 1989/VVL 0879963 Price £10.99
Certificate 15 Director Martin Davidson
Producer Steve Tisch Screenplay Tom McCown Lead Actors Ally Sheedy, Virginia Madsen, Phoebe Cates, Don Michael, Treat Williams 91 minutes
Rites-of-passage drama set in 50s Alabama revolving around the story of

three girls growing up in a finishing school.

Nicky & Gino

USA 1987/VVL 0880003 Price £10.99
Certificate 15 Director Robert M. Young
Producers Marvin Minoff, Mike Farrell Screenplay Alvin Sargent, Corey Blechman Lead Actors Tom Hulce, Ray Liotta, Jamie Lee Curtis 104 minutes
Well-meaning Rain Man-style drama with Ray Liotta as a brilliant medical school student living with his backward brother who works as a dustman to put Liotta through college.

U.H.F.

USA 1989/VVL 0879983 Price £10.99
Certificate PG Director Jay Levey Producers Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde Screenplay Jay Levey, Weird Al Yankovic Lead Actors Weird Al Yankovic, Victoria Jackson, Kevin McCarthy 93 minutes
Weird Al Yankovic plays the manager of a TV station which has been won by his uncle in a poker game, who achieves unexpected success by opting for popular lowbrow shows.

Voices From Beyond

Italy 1991/Video Gems NR 5008
Price £10.99
Certificate 18 Director Lucio Fulci Producer Luigi Nannerini Screenplay Lucio Fulci, Piero Regnoli Lead Actors Duilio Del Prete, Karina Huff, Pascal Persiano 90 minutes
A murdered man tries to find his killer from beyond the grave by using his daughter as a channel.

White Zombie

USA 1932/Redemption RETN 014
Price £12.99
Certificate PG Director Victor Halperin
Producer Edward Halperin Screenplay Garnett Weston Lead Actors Bela Lugosi, Madge Bellamy, Joseph Cawthorn, Johnny Harron 70 minutes
Zombies in Haiti work for a sugar mill owner who lures a beauty to his lair. Reminiscent of Carl Dreyer's *Vampyr* in its use of dislocated music, dialogue and images. Genuinely creepy. B/W

Retail collections

Animation Classics:

National Film Board of Canada

Canada 1949-88/Connoisseur CR 124
Price £12.99
Certificate PG Directors (Various)
Seven prize-winning films from the National Film Board of Canada featuring Norman McLaren and Evelyn Lambart's *Begone Dull Care*, Caroline Leaf's *The Street* and *The Metamorphosis of Mr Samsa*, John Weldon and Eunice Macaulay's *Special Delivery*, Richard Condie's *The Big Snit*, Ishu Patel's *Paradise* and Cordell Barker's wonderful *The Cat Came Back*. 65 minutes

Tati Shorts

France 1936-67/Connoisseur CR 127
Price £15.99
Certificate U Directors René Clément/Jacques Tati/Nicolas Ribowski
This collection highlights three of the French actor/comedian's short films - *Soigne ton gauche* (1936), *L'Ecole des facteurs* (1947) and *Cours du soir* (1967). B/W & Colour 55 minutes

WIND UP

By Mark Kermode

In August of this year a man appeared in Cardiff Crown Court charged with offences under the Obscene Publications Acts of 1959 and 1964. An enthusiastic horror fan who collects what are considered 'controversial' videos, the man was charged after placing an advertisement offering rare video material in a specialist horror fanzine 'Samhain'. As well as being prosecuted by the Trading Standards Authority under the Video Recordings Act, the Crown Prosecution Service also decided to press obscenity charges for possessing a number of obscene articles for publication for gain.

As a film journalist specialising in the horror genre I was asked by the solicitor for the defence David Vaughan-Birch of the law firm Howard Palser and Partners to view several of the impounded videos and to offer my testimony as to their "artistic validity". Of the 23 titles seized, the Crown Prosecution Service nominated seven as representative of the entire impounded cache. These titles consisted of four erotic films, 'Black Throat', 'The Grafenberg Spot', 'Frau Doctor Monteil' and 'Excesse de Sade', and three horror films: 'Nightmares in a Damaged Brain' (branded a 'video nasty' in 1984 but in my opinion an innocuous dark fantasy) and Jörg Buttgerit's 'Nekromantik' and 'Nekromantik 2'. None of these titles has been issued with a BBFC certificate, although Romano Scavolini's 'Nightmares in a Damaged Brain' was passed in a cut form for UK theatrical release in 1982.

The prosecution was initially reluctant to release the tapes for viewing by the defence, but Vaughan-Birch finally succeeded in allowing copies to be brought to London for this purpose. The four erotic titles were successfully copied, but due to a Crown Prosecution slip-up whereby episodes of 'The Big Breakfast' and a children's television programme were recorded instead, of the horror titles only 'Nekromantik 2' was available for me to see.

Despite its sleazy cult reputation, this necrophile love story turned out to be a surprisingly impressive and witty piece of work - a self-referential gothic fantasy which playfully explored themes of fiction versus reality. To the viewer with a knowledge of generic conventions, it is an inventive exercise in audience alienation, graphic in parts, but suffused with a heavy air of fantastical artifice. Contrary to popular reports, 'Nekromantik 2' does not contain any scenes of cruelty to animals or scenes of torture, rape or sadistic humiliation. As I explained in my report: "A degree of genre literacy is crucial to an understanding of this film and for this reason it can correctly be categorised as a 'cult movie'. It would almost certainly have little interest to a non-genre-literate audience."

Martin Barker, a lecturer at the University of the West of England and author of the book 'The Video Nasties' concurred in his report: "I have an overwhelming feeling that ['Nekromantik 2'] simply would not mean anything to other than an aficionado of this kind of film." Since neither Martin Barker nor I believed that 'Nekromantik 2' would have meaning or interest to non-genre fans, it seemed logical to conclude that the film would not have a tendency to deprave or corrupt (the legal test of obscenity). Concerning the pornographic films, Linda Ruth Williams, a lecturer at Liverpool University and author of 'Sex in the Head' drew the following conclusions. 'Black Throat': "Its representations of men and women are highly sexual, non-sexist and entirely non-violent"; 'The Grafenberg Spot': "...might be called a 'feminist couples film' with a sense of humour... it represents the aim of sex as pleasure for both sexes and offers sexual images which could be appealing to men and women"; 'Frau Dr Monteil': "contains only images of voluntary and consensual sex, which is represented as mutually pleasurable to its participants and there are no images of violence or coercion"; 'Excesse de Sade': "the film contains no forced acts of sex... [the acts] are essentially non-aggressive, mutually pleasurable to the aficionado and mutually consenting."

Despite our positive reports, the defence was aware that a jury unfamiliar with pornographic or horror films could easily be shocked by the evidence put forward by the prosecution, which intended to show only disconnected 'highlights' taken out of context. This tactic was employed with success during the 'video nasties' scare of the early 80s, leading to a number of what I consider to be inoffensive titles being branded as 'obscene'.

Hoping for lenient treatment and wishing to avoid imprisonment, the defendant pleaded guilty on 9 August. But the judge - after being shown the 'highlights' without sound and having heard no expert evidence - sentenced the defendant to three months in prison. The defendant is currently serving his sentence, which is subject to an appeal, but it is likely that this will not be heard until Easter 1994, by which time his prison term will be over.

The harshness of the sentence reflects how out of step Britain has become in its assessment of 'special interest' films and videos. These titles are judged dangerous by people with little knowledge of the culture that produces and consumes them. And under such circumstances, defendants find there is little point in pursuing a plea of not guilty.

This is censorship through fear, not reason, and is unacceptable.



Used in evidence: Scavolini's 'Nightmare in a Damaged Brain'

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Poor Scots

From John Brown

I suppose that the pathological venom and arrogance which Allan Shiach and Douglas Mackinnon displayed in their responses to Colin McArthur (S&S September) makes any further argument with them impossible. In the hope, however, that there are people in the Scottish film establishment who don't suffer from such knee-jerk defensiveness, there are some points in McArthur's argument which I would like to elaborate.

What has Scotland produced recently to make Shiach and Mackinnon so satisfied with the status quo? While the latter is impressed by something he calls "significant activity" (whatever that means – presumably it needn't go so far as actually making films), Shiach cites the "range and diversity" of the films financially assisted by the Scottish Film Production Fund of which he is now chairman: *Venus Peter*, *Play Me Something*, *Silent Screem*, *Blue Black Permanent* and *Prague*.

Range and diversity? These films may display a range of physical settings and a diversity of themes, but in another, much more fundamental sense they're all exactly the same: projects conceived for the subsidised production sector and aimed at the minority audience which goes to art houses and RFTs and watches *Screen Two* and *Film on Four*. This is not to denigrate the sector, the audience or the resulting films – I was closely involved with the work of the fund in the 80s and have considerable admiration for several of these films, especially *Play Me Something*. But the homogeneity of the fund's cultural choices does suggest that it is most comfortable institutionally with 'quality'/art-house projects – reflecting, shall we say, a liberal middle-age/class perspective. There are two issues here which the fund should be addressing.

One is that this kind of movie, unless based on a Forster novel, isn't commanding much of an audience or making any real money these days. The second is that the new generation of Scottish film-makers shows little sign of being interested in art-house fare. Their sights are set on making the Scottish equivalents of *El Mariachi*, *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.* and *Reservoir Dogs* – all of them current examples of poor cinema – and getting them into the multiplexes. And before anyone derides that aim as pie-in-the-sky, remember that Bill Forsyth achieved it with that piece of quintessentially poor cinema, *Gregory's Girl*, produced 12 years ago for £180,000.

Forsyth's film was made before the fund came into being – yet despite more than ten years of its operation, no subsequent Scottish production has come near to matching the popular, critical or financial success of *Gregory's Girl*. To work out the reasons and decide whether these might serve as a guide for the future requires analysis and argument about the experience of the last decade. That's why it's a disgrace to find that McArthur's sustained attempt to begin this task has simply been shouted down – from an address in Beverly Hills, mark you – in a

tone of near-hysteria by the man who doubles as the chairman of the fund and its virtual parent, the Scottish Film Council.

These institutions are supposed to be stimulating debate about film culture, not trying to shut it down when they don't like what they hear. Let's hope that those within the production fund and SFC who believe in that function will now respond rationally to the questions McArthur has raised. *Glasgow*

No to Hollywood

From J. A. Limas

How unfortunate that Berenice Reynaud should end her article on Chinese female stars (S&S August) with paternalistic rhetoric. Learning perfect English (or American, to be exact) won't open sesame Hollywood's gates for Gong Li. What American studio is ever going to offer the actress those rich, beautiful, major characters she's been playing in her Chinese films? Half a century later, there is no proof that Hollywood is willing to go Chinese beyond Austrian Luise Rainer as O-Lan (*The Good Earth*) and Katharine Hepburn as Jade (*Dragon Seed*) or at worst Swedish Anita Ekberg as Wei Ling(!) in *Blood Alley*. Yes, Joan Chen has gone west, and has since done nothing worthy of her talent and beauty.

It's good that *Sight and Sound* reserved a cover for Gong Li, along with regular articles on Chinese cinema, Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong, mostly by Tony Rayns. And thank you for *not* succumbing to having Schwarzenegger on your magazine's face. I hope Arnold the Vain reads Jonathan Romney's analysis of what went wrong with this "Last" movie, so the man will realise that he is *not* the action-auteur, kiddies-crusader he thinks he's become.

Paris, France

Beyond Chop-sockydom

From Anna Chen

While pleased that Chinese actresses are gaining a higher profile (S&S August), I remain dismayed that oriental women are still being served passive role models while their feistier sisters are banished to the wilds of Chop-sockydom. I can only hazard a guess at what westerners think Chinese women represent, what with all that "mask of pain", "combination of glamour and tragedy" and suicidal goddess stuff. Personally, I'd like to get down on my knees to He Ping, who gave us the wilful brat (Zhao Mana) we had to learn to love in *Swordsman in Double-Flag Town*. And whatever happened to the statuesque dykey collaborator in *The Last Emperor*? Now she was interesting.

London NW6

Blonde memories

From David Macleod

Much as I enjoyed "The blondest thing on the beach" (S&S August), I felt I had to write in defence of Buster Keaton.

Candy Johnson appeared in only one film with Keaton, *Pajama Party*, in 1964. She strutted her fringes in other Beach movies, but not Buster's two other outings: *Beach Blanket Bingo* and *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini* (which, thanks to the unfortunate connotation of the word "stuff" was retitled *How to Fill a Wild Bikini* in this country). Buster's part in *Pajama Party* was as Chief Rotten

Eagle; unfortunately, his costume bears no relation to the one described in the article. However, in *Beach Blanket Bingo*, he does spend most of the film chasing a bikini-clad girl – the beautiful Bobbi Shaw, who shared most of Buster's Beach-movie scenes.

By the time he made the five American-International films (*Sergeant Deadhead* and *War, Italian-Style* in addition to the three Beach movies), Buster was comfortably well off, thanks mainly to the \$60,000 Paramount paid him for his life story (which Sidney Sheldon proceeded to fictionalise completely). The reason Buster did the AIP films was because they asked and he loved to work. It all goes to prove what Annie Griffin touches on in her article; the Beach movies were pretty terrible and so forgettable that they tended to merge into one long, confusing mess.

London W1

Kosher cowboys

From Michael Elias

I read with great interest the two articles on "Kosher Hollywood" (S&S June) and searched in vain for mention of *The Frisco Kid* (1979). Directed by Robert Aldrich, it is the story of a young Polish Rabbi (Gene Wilder) who is sent to San Francisco in the 1850s. Cheated out of his passage, he joins up with a bank robber/cowboy (Harrison Ford) who is also on his way west. The two men share adventures as they cross the country, the Rabbi becoming 'Americanised' along the way and forging a friendship with the cowboy. As co-author of the screenplay I am painfully aware of the film's faults (a result of deviations from the original screenplay, of course); however, it is a film about Jews, with a Jewish hero, and it tries to tell a story (albeit comic) of the experience of the Jewish immigrant. *The Frisco Kid* was made by a major studio, with two stars, and was fairly successful at the box office. It is still a popular video rental and, although my evidence is largely anecdotal, of all the films you mentioned I would wager it is the most popular among Jewish audiences.

Frank Shaw and I wrote the screenplay to provide American Jews with a missing chapter in their own history, that is, their role in the settling of the early West, a role which Hollywood has denied them as systematically as it has to African Americans. This aim was shared by Mace Neufeld, who worked extremely hard over a period of eight years to get the film produced.

Your readers may also be interested to know that the screenplay was originally set up with Mike Nichols to direct and Dustin Hoffman as the Rabbi.

Warner Bros, California

Everyman

From Peter Howden

In December this year the Everyman Cinema in Hampstead celebrates its 60th anniversary as a repertory cinema. We are planning a special programme of events, and would like to hear from anyone who remembers going to the Everyman in the early days, or has particular recollections of the cinema between 1933 and 1993. Contributions will be featured as part of the programme, in an anniversary booklet and at an archive exhibition event.

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The competition

Entrants are invited to write a 1500 word review of any film released in Britain during October of this year. Among the films scheduled for release are Philip Kaufman's *Rising Sun*, Jane Campion's *The Piano*, Danny Cannon's *The Young Americans*, Ken Loach's *Raining Stones*, Thomas Schlamme's *So I Married an Axe Murderer* and Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Three Colours: Blue*.

The judges will be looking for writing which intelligently conveys the experience of watching the film, shows

a knowledge of film generally and displays an ability to relate the visual language of the film to its content.

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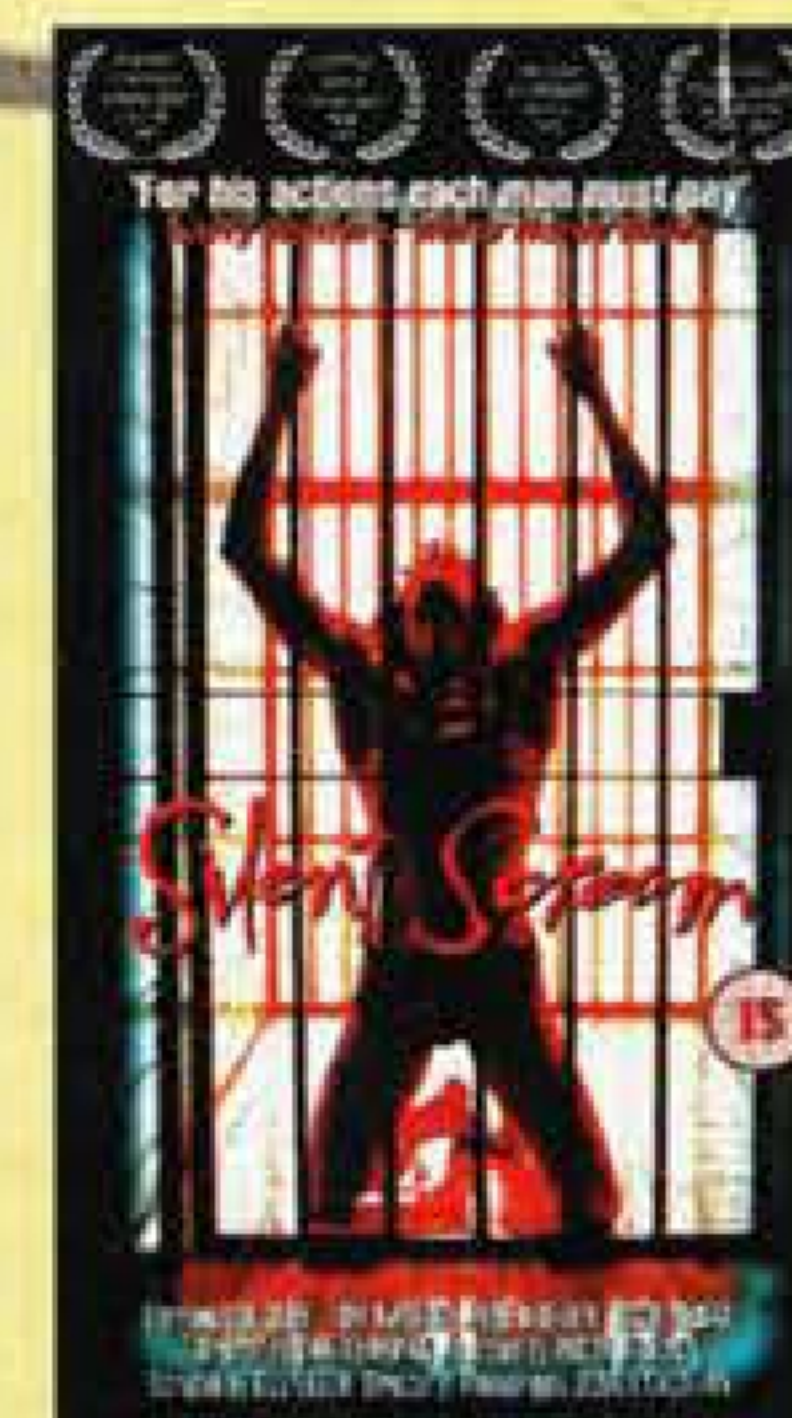
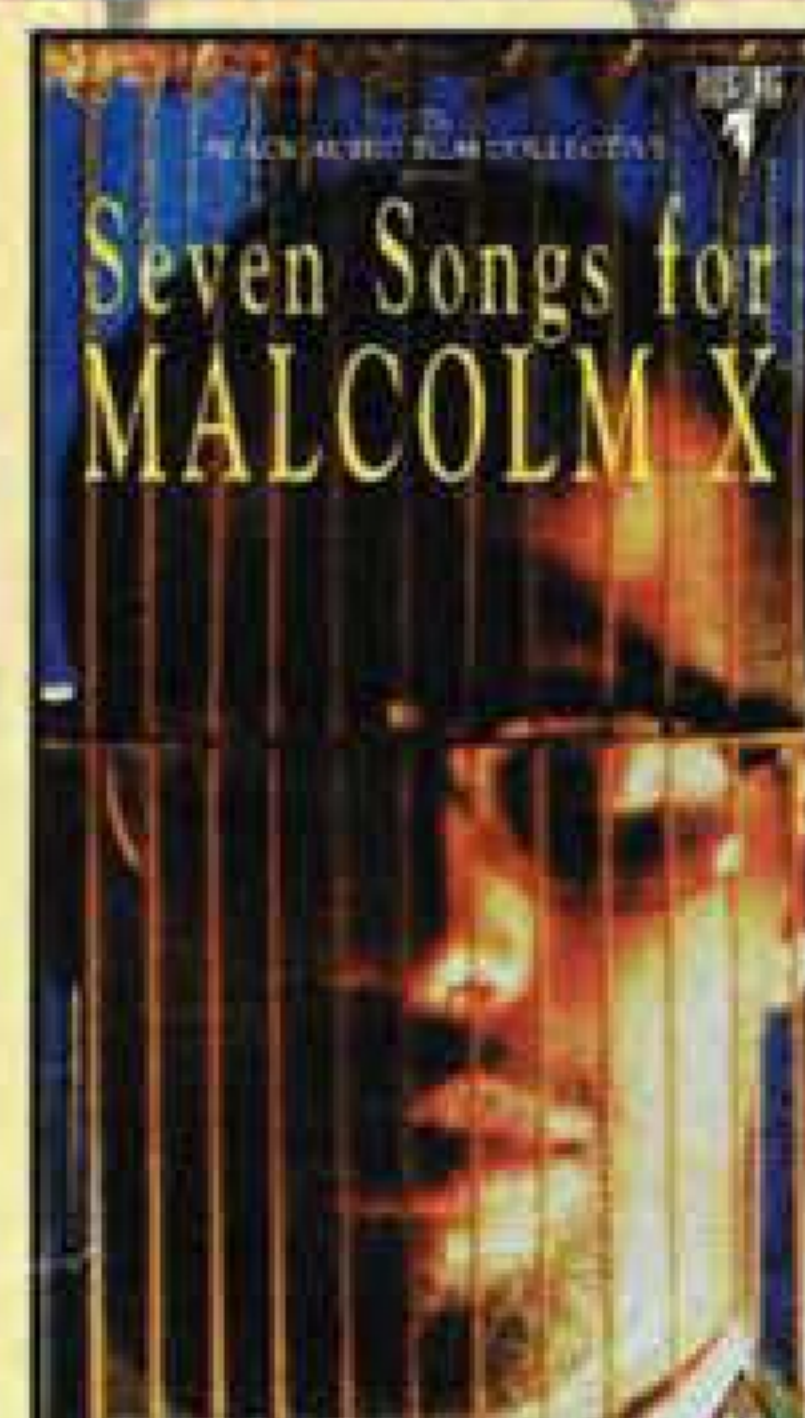
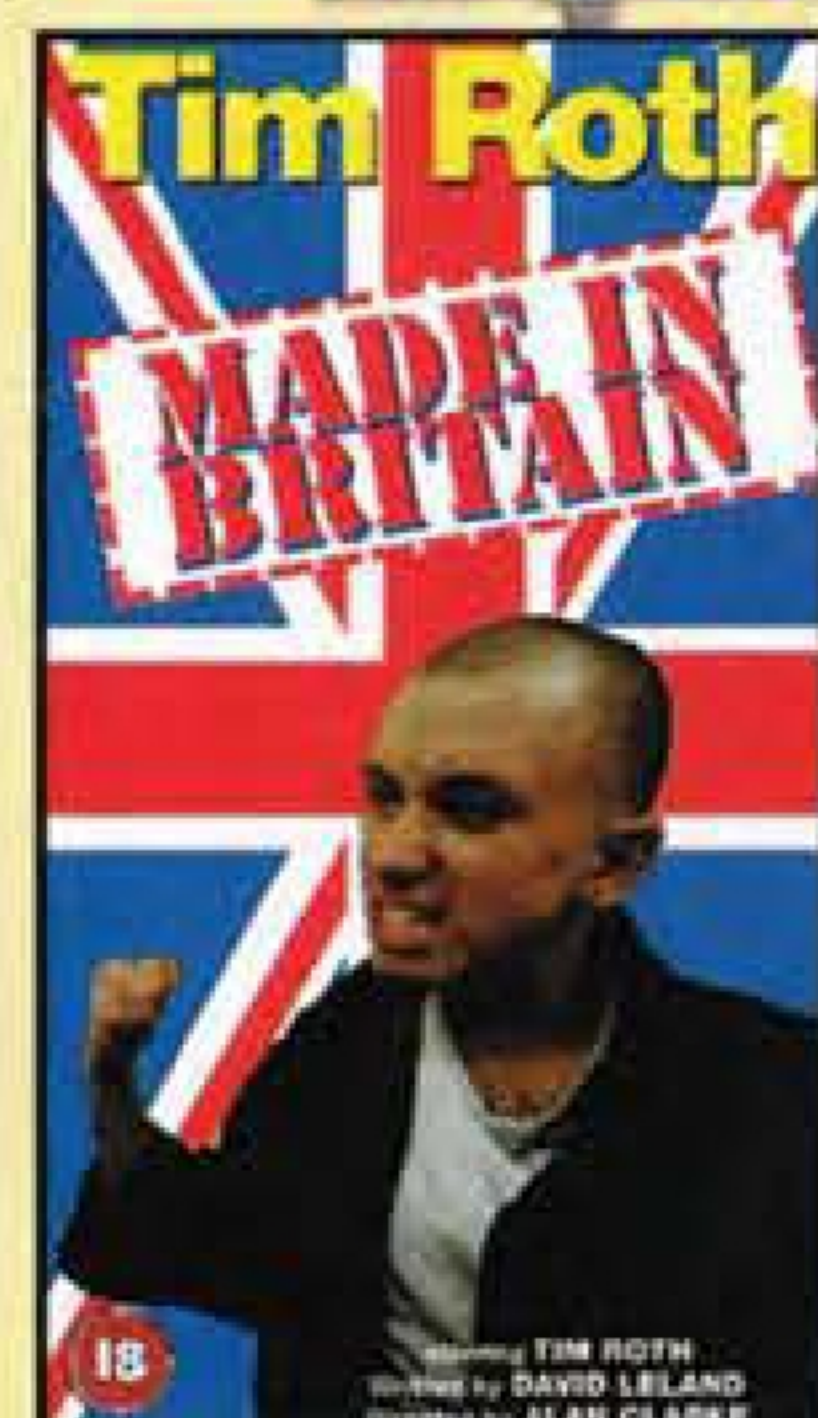
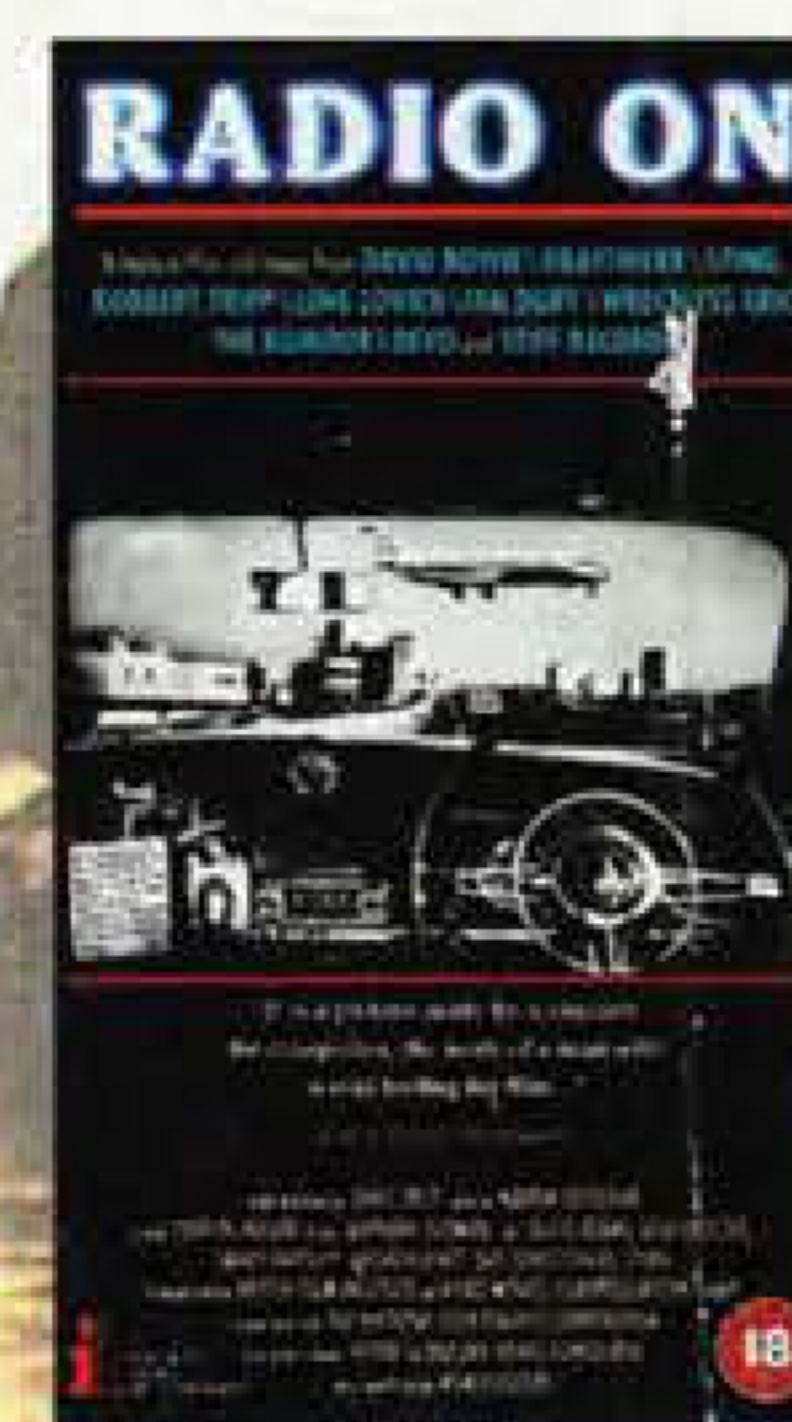
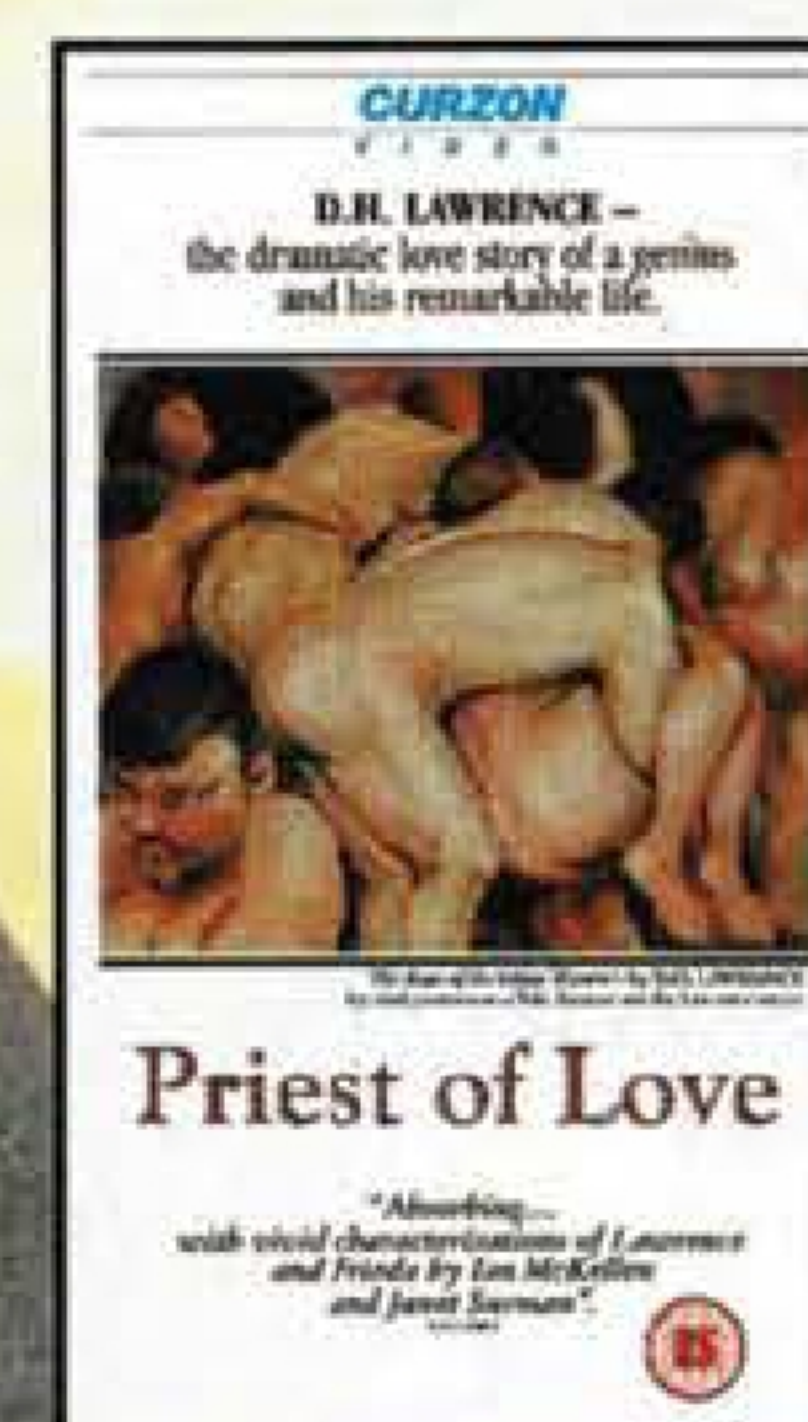
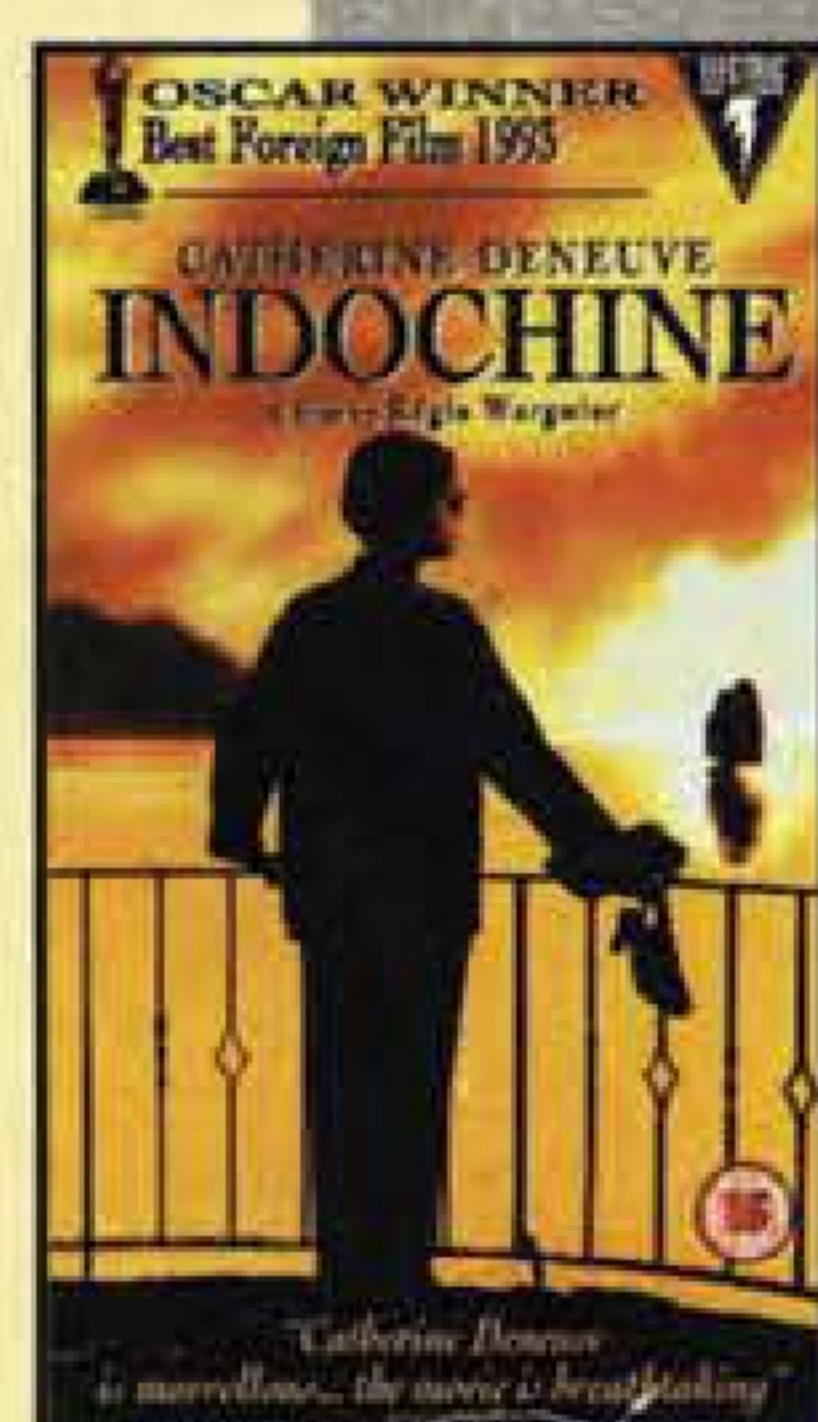
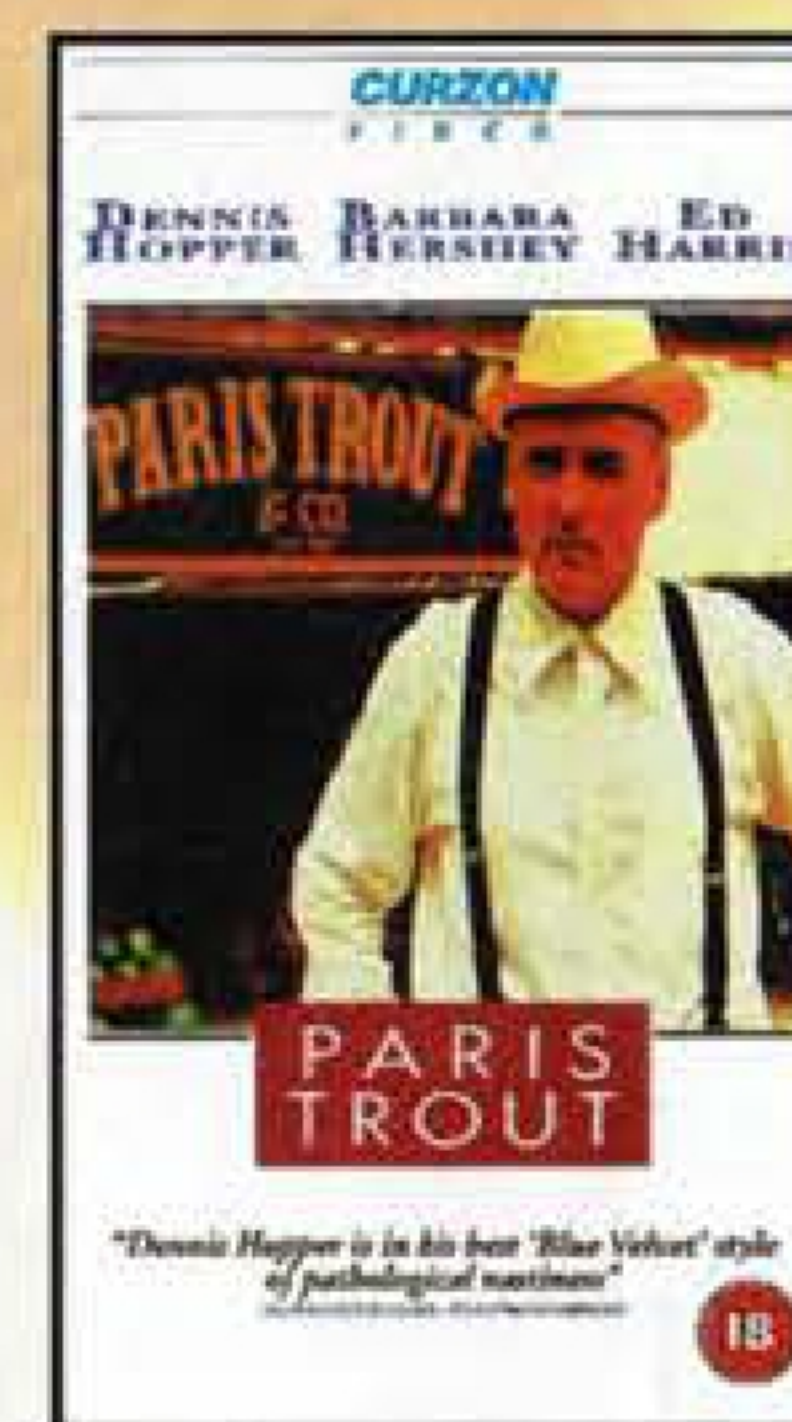
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